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FUSION

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CONTENTS

4 **Evercade EXPands**

Andrew Fisher charts the Evercade console family history so far.

8 **Review: Street Fighter VI**

12 **Fusion Look Back**

Ring of Red (PS2).

16 **Fusion Love**

Limbo (Xbox 360).

18 **Review: Minecraft Legends**

21 **Rare's Big Games on A Tiny Screen**

Retro Faith looks at how Rare milked every last drop of power out of Nintendo's Game Boy.

26 **You Are Now Entering...**

Alan Hammerton leads a new expedition to stunning video game locales.

32 **Fusion Musical Marvels**

Ben Honebone, Andrew Fisher, and Paul Twist form a successful rock band and become guitar heroes.

36 **Toy Polloi**

Miles of Mayhem - a toy world record?

40 **ZX Holidays: Island Getaways**

Paul Twist can't afford a holiday so, naturally, he's turned to his trusty Spectrum for an island getaway.

44 **Review: Lego 2K Drive**

48 **Fusion Love**

The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds (3DS).

50 **10 Classic 90s Arcade Games**

Retro Faith was born in the arcades of the Trocadero and Sega World. Here are ten classics from that era.

56 **Fusion Reactor**

More musings from a gaggle of gaming addicts.

58 **That Moment When...**

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FUSION

Welcome to FUSION. Whether you're reading these words via the digital issue on your monitor or tablet, or you're a print media enthusiast (like me) and holding FUSION in your hands, it's never been easier to read our humble games mag. You can now access all the magazines and books published by Fusion Retro Books for as little as £6 a month via the new bookshelf membership program. As FUSION approaches its fiftieth issue, there is now a simple and affordable way to read over forty back issues.

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We've been "enjoying" a heatwave in the UK, and I've been hiding from the giant yellow fireball in my office, putting this month's collection of decade-hopping gaming content together. Andrew Fisher talks about the rise of Evercade, Retro Faith looks at Rare's impressive Game Boy output, and Alan Hammerton takes you on a tour of Stormwind in a new feature where we'll be visiting some of gaming's many cities. If sunbathing is your thing, then Paul Twist has some ZX Holiday destinations in mind. If not, maybe you'd like to attempt a world record with Toy Polloi or revisit a PS2 strategy game with Andrew Oyston. We also have reviews of *Street Fighter VI*, *Minecraft Legends*, and *Lego 2K Drive*, our regular features, and more.

MISSION START!



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Ben Honebone

FUSION Issue 46

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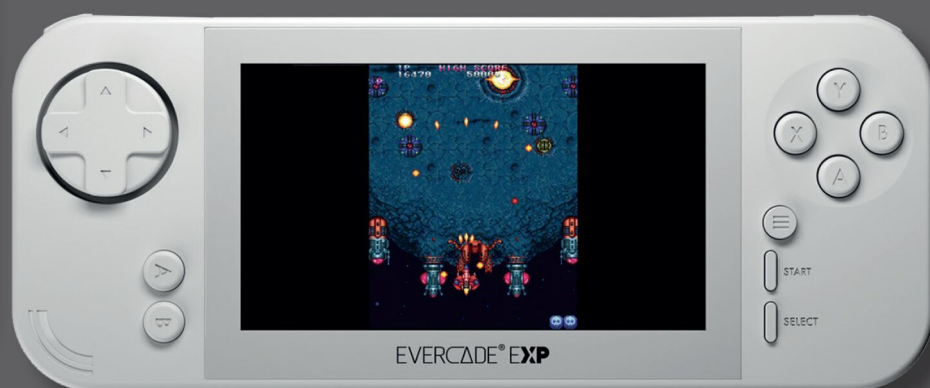
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EVERCADE



EXPANDS

THE LATEST ADDITION TO THE EVERCADE RANGE IS THE NEW EXP HANDHELD, WITH UNIQUE FEATURES AND NEW GAMES. ANDREW FISHER LOOKS AT THE NEW DEVICE AND THE STORY OF THE CONSOLE FAMILY SO FAR.

I was sceptical when the original Evercade was announced, but I also realised there was a lot to like about its ideas. The curated cartridges have a theme, the printed manuals offer instructions and little snippets of history, and as a collector, there is an appeal to seeing all those boxes lined up on the shelf. Adding rare, expensive, and previously unreleased titles alongside a crop of great homebrew/indie games makes each cartridge excellent value for money.

I placed a pre-order for the Limited Edition version of the new EXP handheld to replace the original. The vanilla Evercade has received one

final firmware update but is no longer guaranteed to be compatible with new cartridge releases. A lorry-load of the Limited Edition consoles bound for Europe was promptly stolen, and Blaze had to manufacture new ones. That meant a long delay for the backers who had pre-ordered the Limited Edition. However, it did fix one problem with the new console, with some of the first generation of Evercade cartridges proving difficult to fit into the new machine. Thus it has a slightly wider slot to give a better fit. The backers had their names added to the 'Hall of Heroes' in the machine's credits.

The main differences between the Limited Edition (now no longer for sale) and the Standard Edition were the extras in the box and the colour of the console itself. The Standard console is white and comes with the Irem Arcade 1 cartridge. The Limited Edition is black, with the Irem Collection 1 and Toaplan Arcade 1 cartridges. Both editions came with the Capcom Collection built-in to the machine. The 18 games represent a cross-section of Capcom's history, including NES and SNES titles and arcade originals. There was some controversy over this with existing



Evercade owners. Why was it only available with the new device and not as a separate cartridge? Would there be a guarantee for EXP adopters that the bundled software would always be available in future?

Other features have been brought over from the VS console. The EXP features Wi-Fi access, allowing firmware updates and a 'Game of the Month' download. It also has the Secrets menu, allowing codes and button presses to be entered and hidden games on the various cartridges

unlocked. Options include screen resolution, scanlines, volume, and adjusting the borders displayed in the menu during gameplay (depending on screen orientation and size). Inserting a cartridge gives a list of the games available, and selecting a game takes you to the Play menu, which provides you with basic information about the game and the option to reload your last save, getting you into the game quickly. During the game, pressing the Menu button gives options, including the screen settings, saving the current game, or quitting. You can also look at the control diagram or return to the main menu.

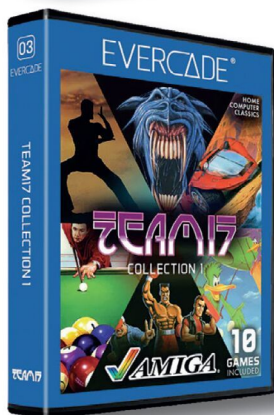
Of course, the biggest talking point of the EXP is TATE mode (pronounced "tar-tay" from the Japanese). It allows the console to be rotated and played in a vertical orientation. The face has extra buttons to accommodate this, and the

UP ON THE SHELF, THAT'S WHERE I NEED TO BE

Collecting Evercade cartridges is easy, with each release numbered and given a colour-coded inlay jacket. There have been three ranges so far.



RED: The original cartridges cover console games and homebrew titles and come in a distinctive red sleeve. There have been 29 releases to date (June 2023), the latest being Piko Interactive 3, which includes platformer *40 Winks*, the Mega Drive FPS *Zero Tolerance*, and the previously unreleased *Radikal Bikers*.

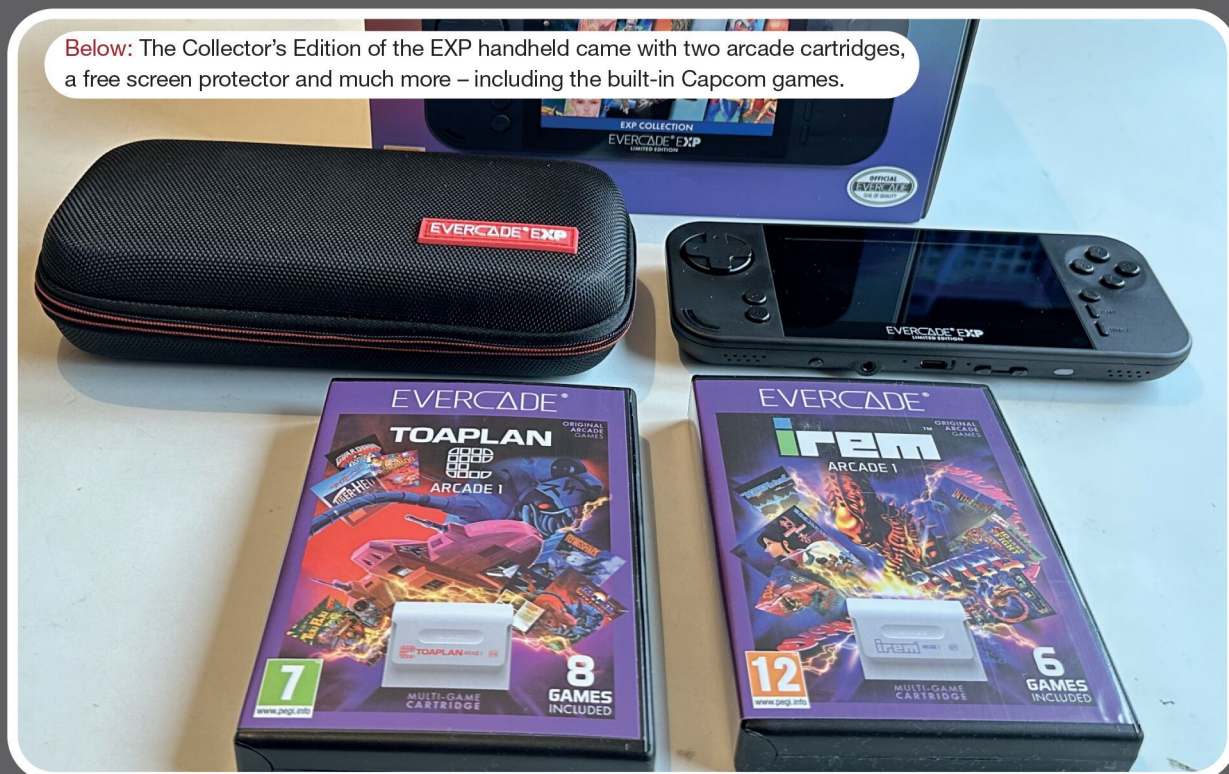


PURPLE: The second range is for arcade games, including the recent Toaplan and Irem collections. There have been nine releases so far, with Toaplan Arcade 2 bringing more of that company's arcade legacy to the console.



BLUE: The newest range is home computers, with two THE C64 Collections (licensed through Retro Games Ltd) and the first Amiga cartridge in the shape of Team 17 Collection 1. It features some of the company's best-loved titles, including *Qwak*, *Alien Breed* and *Project-X Special Edition*, after the earlier *Worms Collection* (in the red range).

Below: The Collector's Edition of the EXP handheld came with two arcade cartridges, a free screen protector and much more – including the built-in Capcom games.



TATE mode can be enabled or disabled using a button on the edge. It can be tricky because the Start and Select buttons, used for inserting coins and starting a game, are above the screen. It can be frustrating mid-game when you want to add a credit and continue playing. Existing games have been updated through firmware to support TATE mode, and the menu system shows when a game is compatible. Future cartridge releases will include icons to indicate which games are compatible. At launch, 21 games worked in TATE, with four more featured on the recently released Toaplan Arcade 2 cartridge.

The 4.3" IPS screen is clear and looks excellent in both modes. The resolution has been increased to 800x480, although the screen is the same physical size as the original. The sound quality is good through the built-in speaker or headphones (thanks to the built-in jack). Physically, the EXP makes other changes. The shoulder buttons are now split into L1 and L2, R1 and R2, giving the possibility of playing more recent titles requiring extra buttons. There is still an HDMI-out at 720p, but the charging cable is now USB-C. The battery has a higher capacity of 5000 mAh, allowing up to five hours of play per charge. There is 4GB of onboard memory, eclipsing the original's 256 Mb. The processor inside is faster at 1.5GHz compared to the original's

1.2, giving scope for more recent consoles to be emulated and a wider range of indie/homebrew titles. *Donut Dodo*, featured as the first Game of the Month on EXP, is a great example and incredibly playable.

For me, the console feels comfortable in the hands, even for an extended period of play. Like the original, I did find the case got warm after an hour – so it is best left to cool before packing away. I keep mine in the hard case given away with the Limited Edition, which has room to carry a couple of cartridges and the charging cable. As noted, there is some minor inconvenience when in TATE mode, but this is outweighed by the benefits of playing the games in the correct screen ratio. Having the Capcom games built-in is a good idea because you always have something to play – along with the Game of the Month.

In conclusion, the Evercade EXP is an upgrade on the original handheld and a step forward for the console. It does not compete with the many handhelds offering thousands of ROMs for emulation or, indeed, more expensive devices such as the Steam Deck. It offers a unique range of games, officially licensed and supporting homebrew developers, in a highly collectable form. ■

A CAVALCADE OF EVERCADES

Evercade is a shapeshifter, changing shape as time goes on.



EVERCADE VS: Although you could play the handheld on TV through its HDMI-out, the VS took the games into the living room in console form. Its most significant innovation - the two cartridge slots: inserting combinations of cartridges would unlock hidden games. Up to four controllers could be attached, with a special Link Cable allowing the player to use an Evercade as a controller. The VS also added Wi-Fi, allowing easier firmware updates, and the console could also output in 1080p. The Game of the Month feature downloaded a game (from a future cartridge release) for play on the console for a limited time. The Evercade VS had the unique black Founder's Edition (which included two controllers and extra goodies) and the white Standard Edition. For Evercade's second Anniversary, there was a special bundle containing the white VS console, four controllers, and a white Evercade handheld. The most recent incarnation is the Atomic Limited Edition of 2000 which quickly sold out, with black and yellow warning chevrons to tie in with the forthcoming *Duke Nukem* cartridges.



**EXP
TATE**



EVERCADE EXP: There are two variations of the EXP. The standard console is white, and the Limited Edition is black. A glass screen protector is available for those worried about the screen getting damaged or scratched. Funstock has been offering a range of extra merchandise in the UK for pre-orders and Evercade fanatics. These have included a travel mug, pin badges, a *Flea* plush toy (with Lowtek's NES homebrew title *Flea* appearing on the Indie Heroes 1 collection), and T-shirts. These shirts were produced in association with Seven Squared, helping raise money for the gaming mental health charity Safe In Our World.



STREET FIGHTER™

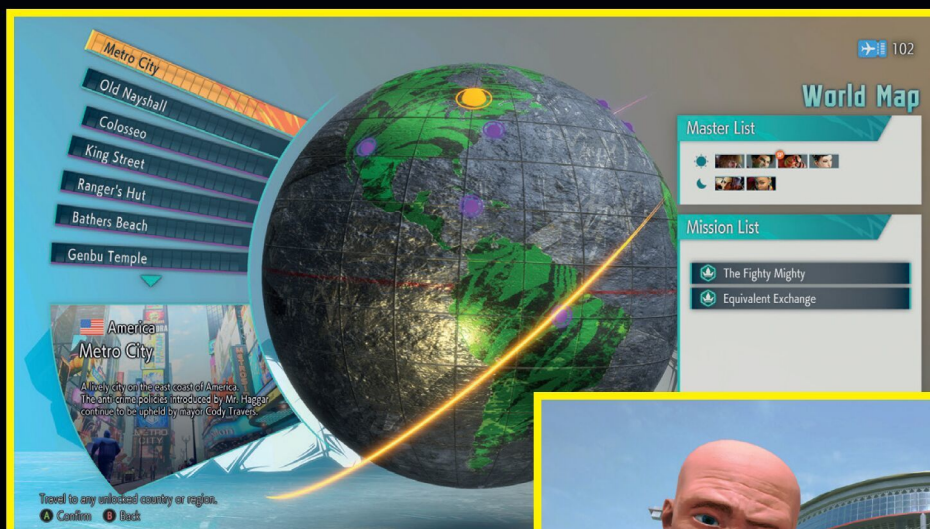
THE FIGHTING STREET GANG ARE BACK IN WHAT IS PERHAPS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND FEATURE-RICH FIGHTING GAME EVER MADE. BEN HONEBONE FORGETS TO EAT.

Fighting games have struggled to provide a satisfying single-player experience since their inception. It's always been more fun to fight against a human opponent, and your chances of learning and improving are far greater when you're not fighting a CPU that can read your inputs. Over the past decade, the bar has been raised, with modern fighters offering more robust story modes and better learning tools. But, there hasn't been one that successfully bridges the gap between the casual player and the experienced veteran – until now.

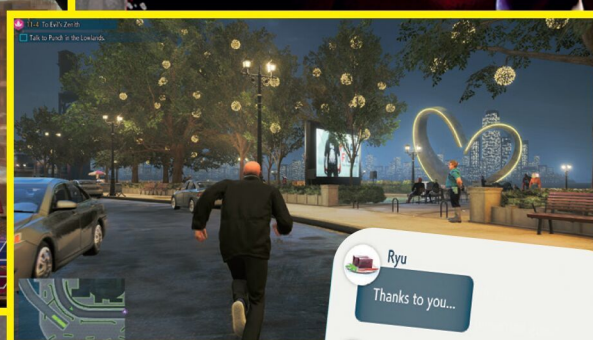
Capcom has taken a “three pillar” approach to *Street Fighter VI* and split the game's content into three distinct modes. This choice is about more than just ease of use; it's a left-to-right progression system that teaches you about *Street Fighter* characters and how to play as them.



Have you ever wanted to get to know Chun-Li? Did it ever cross your mind that Ryu doesn't know how to use messaging apps? Or, have you ever fancied chatting with Blankas's mum? If you're like me and the answer to all these questions is “Of course!” then you're in for a treat. World Tour is an unashamedly light-hearted adventure set in *Final Fight*'s Metro City, where literally everyone wants a fight. The plot is paper thin and serves as a framework for you to run around completing missions and uppercutting



Above: You'll travel beyond the streets of Metro City as the story progresses. Right: That's me outside Hagger Stadium! Below: Fighting the locals in Nayshall, the second city area that you can explore in World Tour.

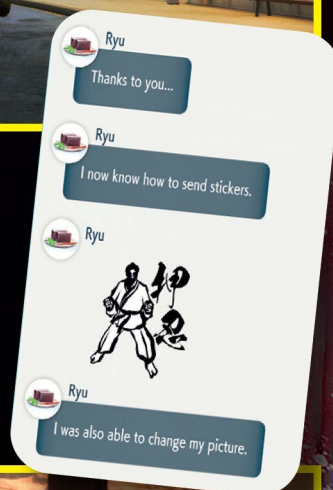


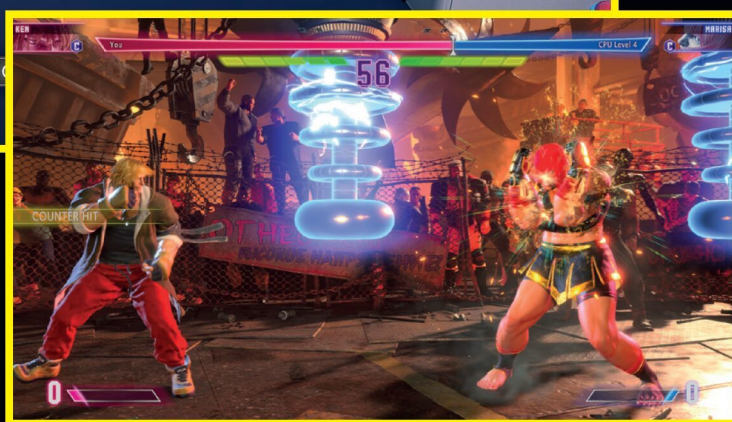
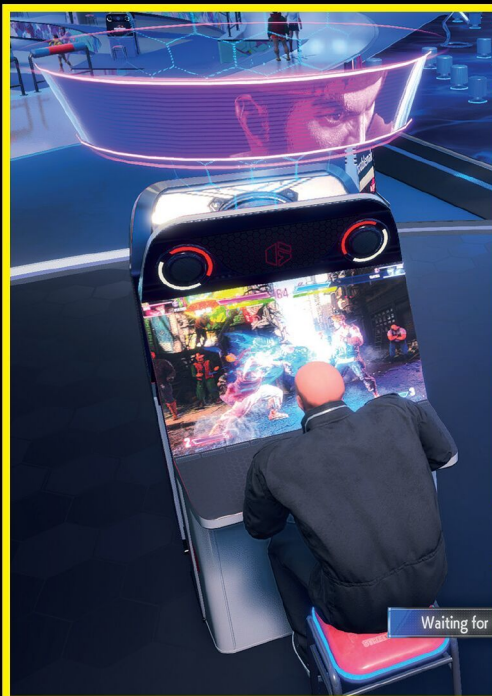
every soul you encounter to level up your avatar.

Finding and befriending the eighteen characters from SFVI's launch roster will enrol you as their pupil, giving you access to their move sets. Fighting the residents of Metro City with a particular style will increase your bond with that 'Master' and open up more techniques you can learn from them. You can also give them gifts you earn from fights or purchase from the shops dotted around World Tour's semi-open world. Each Street Fighter character is susceptible to a particular offering that will increase your bond with them quickly (no matter how many times you give it to them).

Everything in World Tour is designed to teach you how to play *Street Fighter*, and in this endeavour, Capcom has succeeded. Whether you're familiar with the genre or not, World Tour offers you a way to learn and improve that's actually fun. And, coincidentally, World Tour is the next best thing to a genuine sequel to 1989's *Final Fight*.

Above: Metro City looks pretty at night. Right: Ryu's hilarious messages are a highlight. Below: Fighting Retsu from the original *Street Fighter* is an example of the fan-service you'll find in World Tour.





Above: The Battle Hub's interactive match-making system works well. **Right:** Extreme Battle will keep you on your toes, and provides an occasionally welcome distraction. **Below Right:** If you've ever wished you could have access to Ryu's Shoryuken, Guile's Flash Kick, and Zangief's Lariat, all at the same time, Avatar Battles will make your dreams come true!



SFVI's answer to the soulless online lobbies of past games is a fully interactive 3D space where your avatar from World Tour can interact with other players' avatars. There are arcade cabinets everywhere, and you can sit at them to fight in casual matches (training while you wait for an opponent), indulge in an Extreme Battle (more on that later), or play a selection of Capcom's classic arcade games (with a high-score challenge if you wish). You can also visit kiosks to change your avatar, purchase new gear to pimp your digital self, and sign-up for Tournaments.

You can engage in Avatar Battles at the Battle Hub's centre. All the EXP you've earned, and moves you've learned from World Tour, come into play here as you pit your creation against everyone else's. Combining the moves from multiple characters makes for some amusing and surprisingly satisfying battles, and



it also provides an incentive to keep levelling up your avatar in World Tour long after you've completed the main campaign.

I've spent almost all my time online with SFVI in the Battle Hub. In much the same way as World Tour builds learning tools into an enjoyable package, the Battle Hub puts matchmaking and the inevitable confrontation of the fight into an interactive system where everyone feels equal. Of course, fights in the Battle Hub can be just as tough as those you'll find in Ranked Matches, but it's a neutral and friendly environment to (lose repeatedly) learn in.

FIGHTING GROUND

● For a more in-depth look at SFVI's combat system, check out our feature on the Closed Beta in issue 41.

« ARCADE PRACTICE **VERSUS** SPECIAL MATCH ONLINE »

ONE ON ONE

TEAM BATTLE



FIGHTING GROUND



Above: SFVI's Training Mode is gloriously comprehensive.

The content of Fighting Ground is everything you'd expect from a traditional fighting game release; Arcade Mode, Training, Character Guides, Combo Trials, local multiplayer, and the option to activate matchmaking for online Ranked or Casual matches. There is also Extreme Battle to enjoy; a new mode where various hazards are added to the stage to spice things up, or certain conditions must be met during the fight to win. It's a simple diversion from the real matches, but it works well, is occasionally hilarious, and can also be considered a tool for improving your game.

Everything in Fighting Ground does what it says on the tin (or box). The Arcade mode is a standard affair that works fine alongside World Tour's forty-hour campaign. The quality of the Character Guides is improved from previous games, and the sheer amount of options and flexibility in Training Mode is slightly overwhelming in the best possible way.

I've tried to find something about SFVI to complain about. Everything I've come up with is a performance issue that will make little difference to the average player, such as the pop-in and framerate drops in World Tour mode. I didn't get all the characters I wanted in this game (bring back Gouken!), but I don't think penalising Capcom for omitting my favourite fighter is fair criticism. *Street Fighter* hasn't looked or felt this good to me since the *SFII* era, and it's hard to find fault in such a generous and comprehensive package. From the sublime netcode and online experience to the wealth of single-player content and learning tools, *SFVI* is the complete package. ■



PlayStation®2



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ANDREW OYSTON CONTINUES HIS INCURSION INTO THE LIBRARY OF EARLY PS2 GAMES WITH A LOOK BACK AT KONAMI'S MECH-INFUSED, 3D STRATEGIC WARFARE.

■ *Ring of Red* is not, as the more cynical of you may think, an Xbox 360 emulator. No, this particular title is a turn-based strategy game set in an alternate 1960s, where Japan has been divided into the Communist North and pro-democracy South - much like Korea was in actuality. You're given plenty of background and repurposed historical footage to get you up to speed. You'll note something amiss - giant Armoured Fighting Walkers (AWFs).

Over a dozen and a half missions, you'll follow Masami Von Weizegger and his cohorts traipsing across Japan, kicking several shades out of Communist forces. Along the way, you'll

participate in a story worthy of the best daytime soap operas, delivered with a subtlety akin to said tele-novellas. But the tale is only the dressing for the main dish.

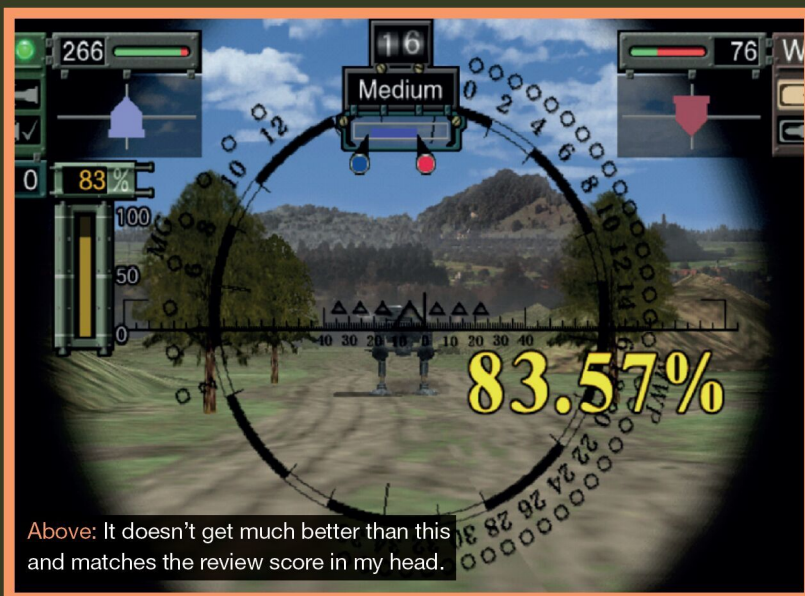
The missions start with a one-on-one training round, but you'll confidently control multiple units after just a few battles. To the developer's credit, the structure of the missions is cleverly designed to guide the player into the role of commander gently. However, you will be handed your marching orders several times, and saving is only permitted between levels. You'll also need plenty of time to tackle the more complex battles. *Ring of Red* never treats the player harshly, and that adds to its 'one more go' draw.

As you'd expect, this isn't a fast-paced game. The strategic gameplay takes place on an isometric map detailing your units, the enemies you can see, and the terrain around you. But, the actual combat occurs in a fully rendered landscape, with your hulking great AFWs duking it out in bouts that last ninety seconds per turn. It's here that the intricacies of the game reveal themselves.

Control of your AFW is important. During each bout, you can close in on or withdraw from your target to a small degree, affecting the

starting percentage of your weapon's accuracy. Tension builds as you wait for the loading lamp to illuminate. At this point, you can fire at your opponent and their troops or issue a Maximum Attack, a special move that varies between the main characters. When choosing to fire, you're presented with a down-the-sight view with an aiming reticle and that important rising hit percentage. The heart-beat accompanying this doesn't make things easier, but the risk/reward of probability makes these encounters extremely satisfying (when it goes your way). The percentage tends to max out around the mid-80s, but wait too long and you might get hit first, restarting the count and wasting precious seconds. Terrain and local conditions will also affect your ability to fight, and all these factors mean there is an excellent depth to the clunking firefights.

You have more to worry about than the AFWs, though. You're given infantry units with which to support your lumbering leviathans. Two teams are ground-based, with the third crewing your AFW, which adds another layer of complexity to the battles. The ground troops can target their enemy counterparts, the AFWs, or repair your battered mecha. The balance of keeping your troops alive, your AFW functional, and dealing with the damage you've sustained will test your abilities.



Above: It doesn't get much better than this and matches the review score in my head.

It is genuinely difficult to find any issues with *Ring of Red*. Of course, you'll need to be interested in strategy games, but if you want to dip your toe in the genre, this release is a pleasant way to do so. Some commitment is required for the longer missions that don't offer an opportunity to save. There is also a lot of button mashing to get through the mission briefing screens, but these are all minor issues.

The presentation in *Ring of Red* is definitive early PS2, but everything you see and hear is executed well, and just how much eye candy do you need for fighting robots? That being said, the game has a style all of its own, and it is to its credit that it isn't lumbered with some half-hearted voice acting, which was commonplace at the time. Characters are nicely drawn, although very stereotypical, whilst the 3D sections wouldn't

look too out of place on the PS1. Still, everything moves fluidly enough, accompanied by a rather strident soundtrack well suited to the topic. Sound effects are also excellent, emphasising the impact of rounds hitting their targets, and the massive idling engines.

Ring of Red reviewed well upon its release and remains an engrossing, under-appreciated gem that, once it has you, will keep you enthralled until its very satisfying conclusion. ■



Above: If Shockwave from Transformers was a walking tank [It would be Brawl - Ed].

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MORE DETAILS COMING SOON

FUSION

Game : Limbo
Year : 2010
System : Xbox 360
Words : Ben Honebone

■ I got a little bit obsessed with *Limbo* back in 2010. I was very ill, bedridden, and grateful to have my Xbox 360 to keep me occupied. *Limbo*'s lonely and oppressive world immediately drew me in, somehow mirroring my own personal journey at the time. I connected to the game's anonymous protagonist as we both stumbled around in the darkness, looking for a way forward.

Strip away the thick, foreboding atmosphere and haunting visual style, and *Limbo* is precisely the kind of game I don't like. There was plenty of platforming, precision jumping, and puzzling throughout the journey, but none of that seemed to matter. Developer Playdead had me hooked after the first appearance of the giant spider (see issue 37 for that particular air-breathing arthropod). Combining familiar 'trial and error' game mechanics with an oblique narrative and a unique, understated, and survival horror-esque aesthetic, *Limbo* lives up to its namesake in every way.

Back to my sick bed, and rather than doing something more constructive with my time, I became obsessed with Xbox Achievements (I'm OK now, honest). The coveted 100% for *Limbo* seemed daunting initially, with the hardest achievement, 'No Point in Dying', requiring you to complete the game in one sitting with five or fewer deaths. I made this achievement my goal in life at the time and found that after only a few failed attempts, I had developed the muscle memory required to unlock it. But I was not content with that. I wanted to complete *Limbo* in one sitting without losing any lives at all.

It took a little more practice to achieve that, but I got there in the end, and I could manage a perfect playthrough on command to impress visiting friends on occasions. I haven't revisited *Limbo* since the miracles of modern medicine fixed me, and I'm not sure I ever will. It was a strange journey during a strange time, and in my mind, *Limbo* seems more like a place I actually visited than simply a game I played. ■





MINECRAFT Legends



IMAGINE SOMEONE MIXED *COMMAND AND CONQUER* WITH *DYNASTY WARRIORS* AND THEN RIPPED OUT ALL THE COMPLEXITY. THAT'S ESSENTIALLY THE NICHE *MINECRAFT LEGENDS* WANTS TO FILL, BUT IS IT ANY GOOD? ZOË KIRK-ROBINSON FINDS OUT.



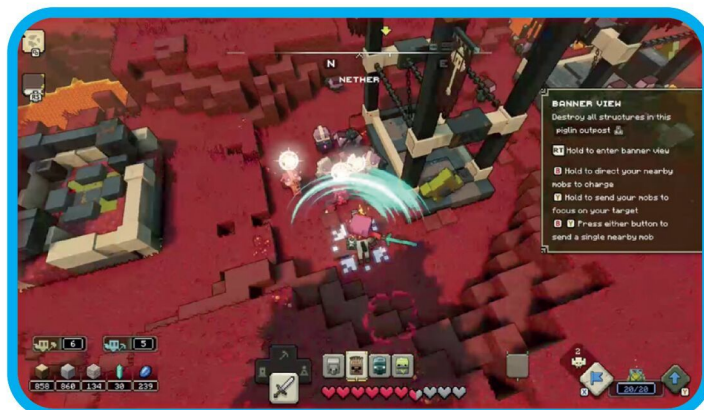
The plot is simple: Piglins have decided to invade a *Minecraft* world, and three demigods, Purple Tentacle, Tiny Guy With Deep Voice, and Big Rock With A High-pitched Voice, call on you to stop them! Don't worry about any of that story, though; it's little more than an excuse for the gameplay. It's like *DOOM*, but it probably wasn't done on purpose here. Once the "Piglins are invading - stop them!!" idea is introduced, you're dumped into the game world, and what you do from here is pretty much up to you. Unless, of course, you decide to attack a Piglin base to get this whole "fight the baddies" thing underway.

The aim of the game is to destroy all the bases and rid the world of the Piglin menace. Once the introductory base is defeated as part of a prolonged tutorial, nine





Below: You can recruit the local wildlife to fight for you, but it won't help.



Above: You have become Death atop thy pale horse (or any other animal you find).

more appear. You can ride up to any of them on your horse whenever you want because *Minecraft Legends* pretends to be an 'open world' game, but if you go to the wrong one, the game will tell you to come back later. Once you arrive at one of the designated "starter" base, you can begin destroying it.

The game will suggest (repeatedly) that you build a "Redstone Launcher" to destroy the bases but not only do you not have to; it's arguably quicker not to. The only building you will need is a Stone Golem spawner. Stone Golems are best for destroying enemy buildings, and to defeat a base, you have to smash down a gate and then destroy a portal. Both

of those things count as buildings, so constructing anything else is just set dressing. The same is true for everything in an enemy base: if it isn't the portal or a way in - you can ignore it. Enemy creatures spawn on a timer from spawner buildings, and those enemies will swarm your minions, mostly ignoring you. It would be a good strategy in any other RTS because you're usually little more than a mouse pointer. In *Minecraft Legends*, it's a game-

breaking decision because you're a physical entity with a crowd-control slash attack.

Your average RTS boils down to building your forces, then marching across the landscape, killing everything. In *Minecraft Legends*, you tell your minions to Zerg Rush the enemy's portal while you kill everything. The Piglins usually aren't even paying attention to you as long as you have minions attacking their stuff, so you're essentially Death Incarnate. Even if you get hit too many times, all you need to do is back off so you can auto-heal. Once your golems are set to a task, they'll continue doing it until they die; so the one time in the entire game that I died, I got a "You destroyed the enemy base!" message while commuting from the respawn point back to the front lines. "Am



Above: This is the best a *Minecraft* game has looked. It's shockingly pretty.



I even a necessary part of this game?”, I wondered. The jury is still out.

Build enough Stone Golems, and once you’ve destroyed a gate to gain access to an enemy base, it won’t matter how many minion

spawn points or enemy arrow turrets are on site as long as you can keep up a decent supply of golems to attack the portal. It can be a challenge at first because Piglin bases corrupt the ground into Nether, which you can’t build on. You must put your spawners (and anything else you decide to build) a short walk from the base. Later in the game, you can use more advanced buildings to reclaim parts of the corrupted land, allowing you to put your spawners inside Piglin bases. It’s a nice time saver but doesn’t change the winning strategy.

In most RTS games, you can select one unit, a group, or all units. *Minecraft Legends* does none of that, but you can only have a set number of units at any time, so it won’t matter. Instead, you wave a banner, and a friendly unit inside the effect radius will follow you. You can target a location (such as the enemy portal) and get them to attack it or run around with them following. Units that are following you will

fight whatever gets near you.

As you progress, you’ll unlock extra buildings to construct. These will be useful out in the field for expanding how many minions you can spawn at villages when the Piglins attack. Piglins will choose a village to attack once daily, and it’s up to you to defend it. It’s a nice distraction, but the whole event takes about five minutes, and then it’s back to destroying portals.

Minecraft Legends is the RTS genre boiled down to its most basic elements, with a hero character from *Dynasty Warriors* dropped into the mix to make the whole thing even easier for newcomers to handle. It’s a beautiful game but lacks any substance to get your teeth into. As a simple introduction to the genre, it may be fun, but if you’ve grown up on *Dune II*, *Command and Conquer* or even *Homeworld* (created by *Minecraft Legends*’ developers), you’ll find little to keep you interested. Give it a shot if you’re new to the genre; otherwise, stick with the harder stuff. ■





RARE'S BIG GAMES ON A TINY SCREEN



WORDS BY RETRO FAITH

■ Long before Rare became synonymous with cute characters, platformers, and Bond shooters, it was known as Ultimate Play The Game. It focused on arcade titles for popular UK 8-bit computers, including the ZX Spectrum and BBC Micro. They made their mark with excellent games that weren't well-known outside the UK, such as *Jetpac* and *Sabre Wulf*. As the Famicom console was released in Japan, the plucky company set up a subsidiary that would eventually become Rare. The new company aimed to get its titles played by a global audience, which led to them signing a deal with Nintendo, focused on making games for the Famicom, NES, and the upcoming Game Boy.

The Game Boy is one of Nintendo's biggest successes, but not a console necessarily associated with Rare. Ask most people, and they will rightly point to their *Donkey Kong* games, and these certainly are the pick of the bunch. But dig a little deeper, and you'll find that Rare published many great Game Boy titles that played directly to the console's strengths. Before the deal with Nintendo, Rare had become the master of cramming large games into small system memories during its 8-bit computer days. Being able to utilise every byte from limited mediums such as floppy discs and cassette tapes put Rare in a perfect position to get the most from the Game Boy's limited hardware.

It's a shame that many of these titles have been lost to the annals of gaming history because some crackers are out there to play. Some of these Rare Game Boy games would

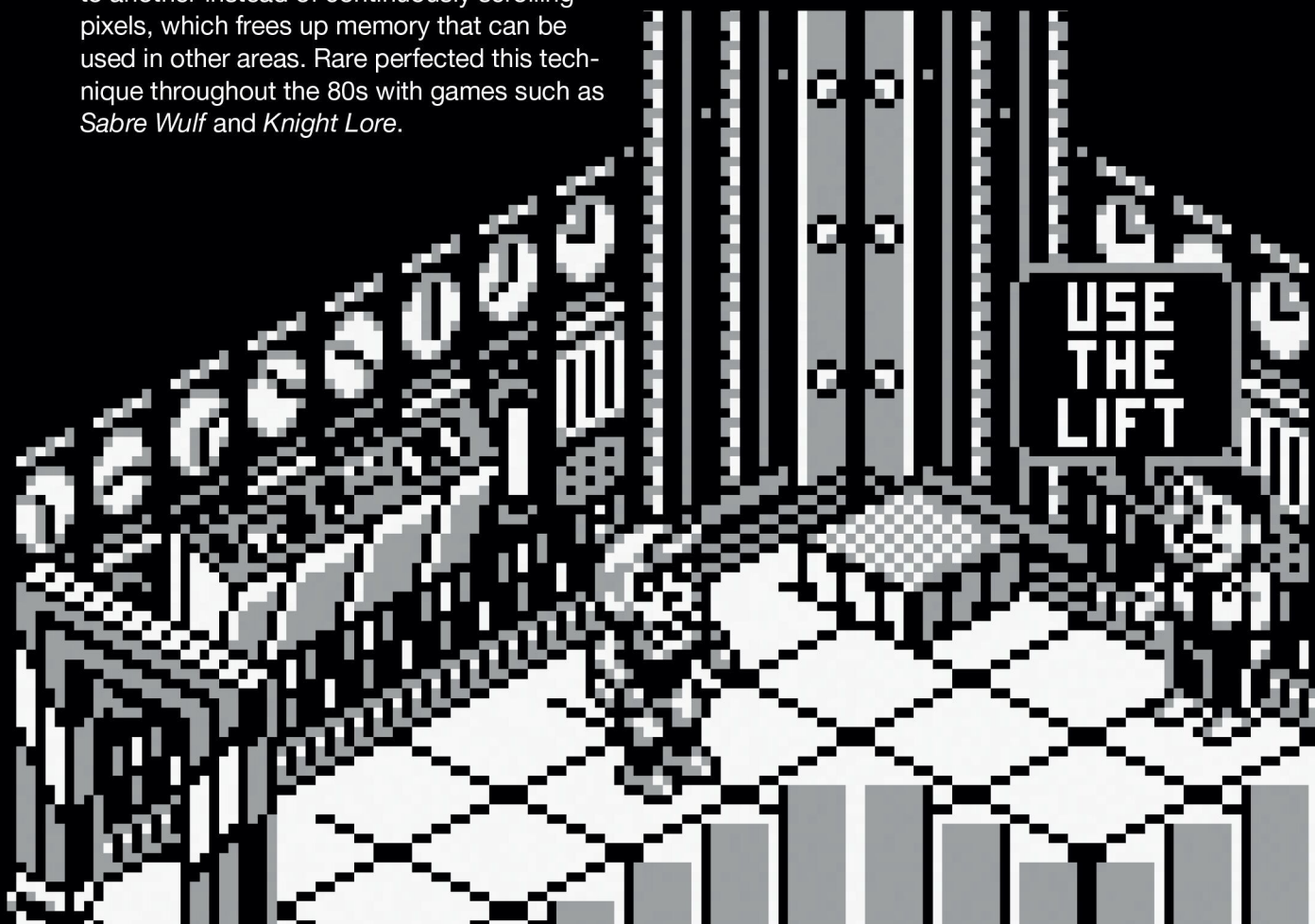
also help lay the foundations for what would come. The bridge between Rare's 8-bit computer heritage and their N64 hits was built by squeezing every bit of juice out of Nintendo's famous handheld. It wasn't just pushing hardware to its limit either; Rare continued to produce high-quality gameplay with its Game Boy titles that still hold up today. Let's look at four of these games and discuss how Rare showed all its skills in creating big games for a small screen.

MONSTER MAX (1994)

Long before adventure games were filled with low factors like amazing stories and beautifully crafted worlds, we used our imaginations to bring them to life. Hardware limitations led to a lack of detailed graphics, and the need to cram a game's data into tiny amounts of memory. Creating sprawling landscapes or huge buildings was impossible, and developers relied on the player to fill in the gaps. One way to avert this lack of visual panache was to use single screens that created an impression of a large game world. The single screens flick from one to another instead of continuously scrolling pixels, which frees up memory that can be used in other areas. Rare perfected this technique throughout the 80s with games such as *Sabre Wulf* and *Knight Lore*.

Rare needed all that experience when it developed *Monster Max* for the Game Boy, and it plays similarly to those isometric adventure games from the 80s. It also has everything all good adventure games need, including item management, platforming, and puzzles. You play as Max, a guitarist trying to stop Krond, the evil overseer attempting to ban music from the world. Each level is split into several single-screen rooms that require you to solve a puzzle or traverse a tricky platforming section. Some tasks involve finding blocks that help you overcome obstacles or jump across gaps.

As you progress through *Monster Max*, the puzzles become more obscure and the platforming more challenging. On top of this, the enemies speed up and become more powerful, which makes *Monster Max* one tough challenge. Given the limitations of the Game Boy, the graphics are detailed, and there are about 100 rooms to conquer. Although the controls feel stiff by modern standards, this stands as a technical marvel, given the limitations of the hardware. Fans of tough adventure games should give this one a go, and it's a credit to Rare for getting this type of game functioning on the Game Boy.



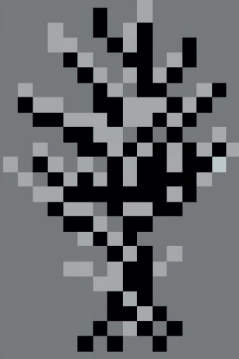


BEETLEJUICE: HORRIFIC HIJINX FROM THE NEITHER- WORLD (1992)

If you grew up in the 90s, you would more than likely remember the madcap shenanigans of Beetlejuice. Tim Burton's iconic black comedy about a deranged spirit hell-bent on making poor Lydia's life miserable was a huge hit. It spawned an animated series and several video game adaptations. Rare was tasked with bringing the craziness to the NES and Game Boy. While the NES version was a quirky top-down action game, the Game Boy version was a simpler side-scrolling platformer.

You play as Beetlejuice, who has promised Lydia that he will rid the house of the infestation of ghosts and creatures he created. The game is broken down into several themed areas, which act as a hub for each set of levels. To finish one hub, you must visit each room, presented as a single screen. You complete each room by destroying all the enemies inside, with many having a mini-boss that appears at the end. Using a projectile known as 'bio-exorcist magic' defeats enemies, and you need good aiming as its slow rate of fire creates an extra challenge. To help break up the gameplay, Beetlejuice can find power-ups like Pogosnake, which allows him to jump higher.

It's all very straightforward and doesn't do much to move the action platformer genre forward. However, there is some lovely pixel art spread throughout the different areas and fans of the film will recognise many of the enemies as they bounce around the screen, causing chaos. It may not be Rare's greatest handheld title, but it showed they could take a well-known franchise and make a competent game. Those skills would come in handy when turning a famous spy movie into one of the greatest games ever.



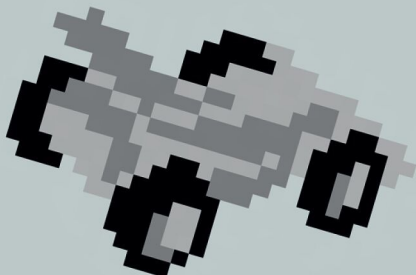
SUPER R.C. PRO-AM (1991)



When it comes to racing games, Rare has produced some excellent kart racers, such as *Diddy Kong Racing* and the *Mickey Mouse Speedway* series. But before the karts came *Super R.C. Pro-Am*, the sequel to the NES classic *R.C. Pro-Am*, also developed by Rare. With the Game Boy Link Cable, up to four players can race against each other, but the one-player mode is just as thrilling as you zip through 24 tracks. You must finish at least third in each race to progress and will lose one of three continues if you fail.

The controls are basic, with just left and right as well as acceleration and fire buttons, but they're responsive. This simple approach to control allows you to master the corners quickly, and any crashes are your fault. The simplified controls suit the constraints of the Game Boy perfectly, and if it were more complex, it would make it difficult to play. Anyone from newcomers to racing veterans can pick up the gameplay mechanics easily. It won't be long before you're swinging around corners and slaloming between the other cars on the track.

The gameplay is bolstered by some classic tropes that add depth, including oil slicks that send you spinning, puddles that slow you down, and boosts that propel you forward. There are also power-ups to collect that give you simple weapons to attack other racers or upgrade your car to get the edge over the competition. *Super R.C. Pro-Am* is a fine racer that works well on the small screen and provides a formidable challenge across many tracks.



PPH -
TRACK
LAPS -



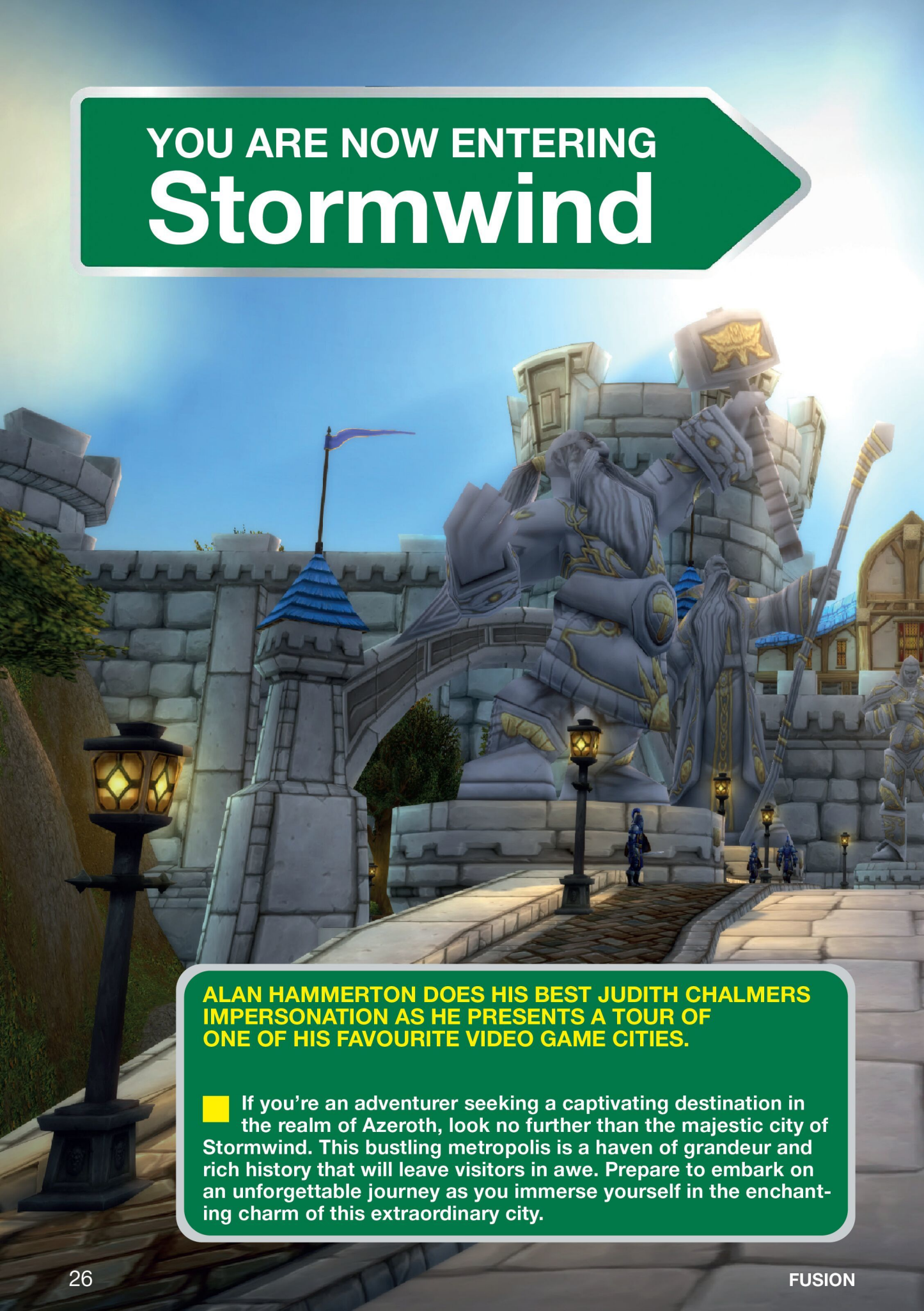
WIZARDS AND WARRIORS X: THE FORTRESS OF FEAR (1990)

Rare's iconic *Wizards & Warriors* series for the NES helped shape the action platform genre, and it wasn't long before a Game Boy entry was developed. You take the role of a knight trying to save the world from an evil force by battling through five chapters. *The Fortress of Fear* differs from the console games by being more linear, with each chapter broken down into several short levels. However, it's just as strict with lives lost for the slightest of mistakes. The lack of a 'continue' feature makes finding all the secret extra lives a necessity rather than a bonus.

Some bosses are infuriating and take a lot of practice to beat; even the standard enemies move at speed and require precision strikes from your sword. This difficulty feels overwhelming initially, but *The Fortress of Fear* provides a

real sense of achievement as you get that little bit further with each attempt. It's old-school arcade gameplay that takes practice to master and remember the enemy patterns so you don't get caught unawares. Gamers today may not appreciate the brutal challenge Rare laid down, but those that want to test their skills and have the patience to learn each level will find this enthralling.

One aspect that can't be questioned is David Wise's fantastic score. Given the hardware limitations, it is an achievement in itself and has a majestic feel of adventure and peril. The graphics are also excellent, with some lovely pixel art used for the item collect screen that pops up bold and clear. The only negative is the slight blur that occurs when the game scrolls, but since you have to take your time, it's never a real issue. *The Fortress of Fear* is a must-play for action fans who want a genuine challenge while enjoying a polished game. ■



YOU ARE NOW ENTERING **Stormwind**

ALAN HAMMERTON DOES HIS BEST JUDITH CHALMERS IMPERSONATION AS HE PRESENTS A TOUR OF ONE OF HIS FAVOURITE VIDEO GAME CITIES.

■ If you're an adventurer seeking a captivating destination in the realm of Azeroth, look no further than the majestic city of Stormwind. This bustling metropolis is a haven of grandeur and rich history that will leave visitors in awe. Prepare to embark on an unforgettable journey as you immerse yourself in the enchanting charm of this extraordinary city.

WORLD OF WARCRAFT



Upon entering Stormwind, you are greeted by towering walls and ornate gates that speak volumes about the city's strength and resilience. As you step inside, a sense of grandeur washes over you like you've entered a realm of fairy tales. The meticulously crafted architecture, a blend of classic medieval charm and regal opulence, is a testament to the city's proud heritage.

The heart of Stormwind lies within its vibrant districts, each with its own distinct character. The bustling streets of the Trade District are a hub of commerce and activity, where merchants from all corners of Azeroth converge to display their wares. Stroll through the cobbled paths and be mesmerized by the colourful market stalls, offering everything from exotic spices to exquisite weaponry.

The serene canals that criss-cross the city offer a tranquil retreat for those seeking a respite from the bustle. Admire the intricate stone bridges that span the waterways, and take a moment to relax in one of the charming canal-side shops. The peaceful ambience and the melodious tunes of wandering minstrels create a serene atmosphere perfect for introspection or a delightful conversation.

If history and culture pique your interest, the awe-inspiring Cathedral Square is a must-visit. The towering Cathedral of Light, with its magnificent stained glass windows and awe-inspiring architecture, is a sight to behold. Step inside and bask in the ethereal glow that bathes the hallowed halls, offering solace and inspiration to weary souls.

No visit to Stormwind would be complete without paying homage to its heroic leaders. The imposing Stormwind Keep, perched atop a hill, is the residence of King Anduin Wrynn. If luck is on your side, you might glimpse the noble king or his advisors as they navigate the corridors of power. Don't forget to wander through the lush gardens surrounding the keep, where carefully manicured flower beds and bubbling fountains create an oasis of tranquility.

As day transitions into night, Stormwind takes on a whole new enchantment. The city lights glow softly upon the cobblestones while torches flicker and illuminate the shadows. The aroma of hearty cuisine fills the air, drawing you to the delightful taverns and inns that line the streets. Savour delectable dishes, raise a glass of ale and revel in the lively camaraderie that permeates the night.

Stormwind is an absolute gem of a city, a testament to Azeroth's indomitable spirit and beauty. Its awe-inspiring architecture, bustling districts, and rich history make it a destination that captures the hearts of adventurers and wanderers alike. So pack your bags, step into the fantasy realm of Stormwind, and prepare to be enchanted by the grandeur that awaits you. ■



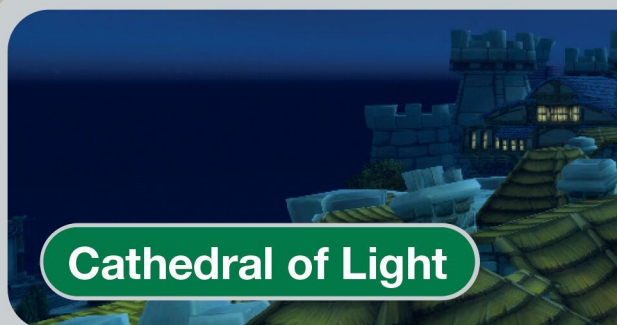
Old Town



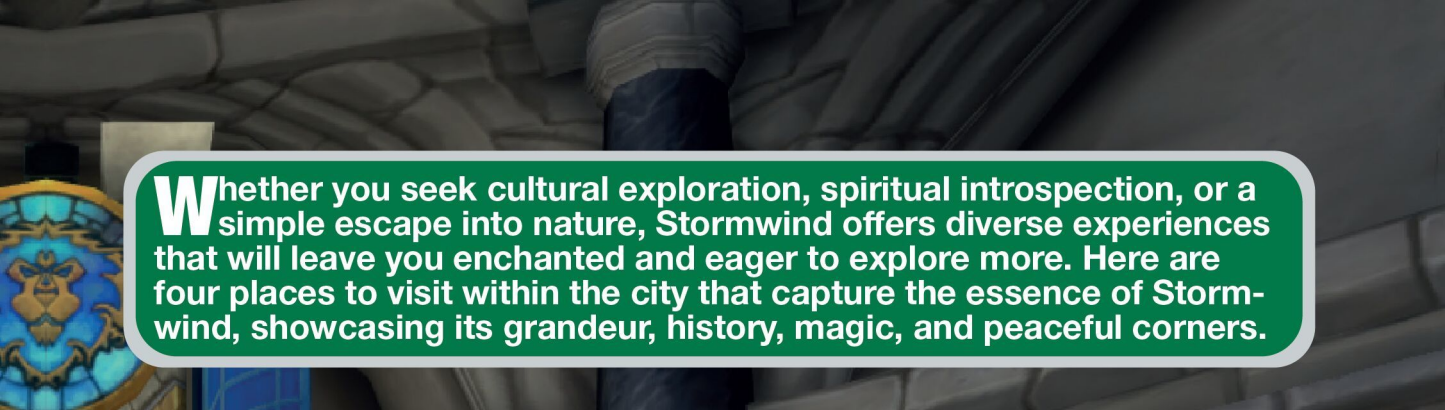
Mage Quarter



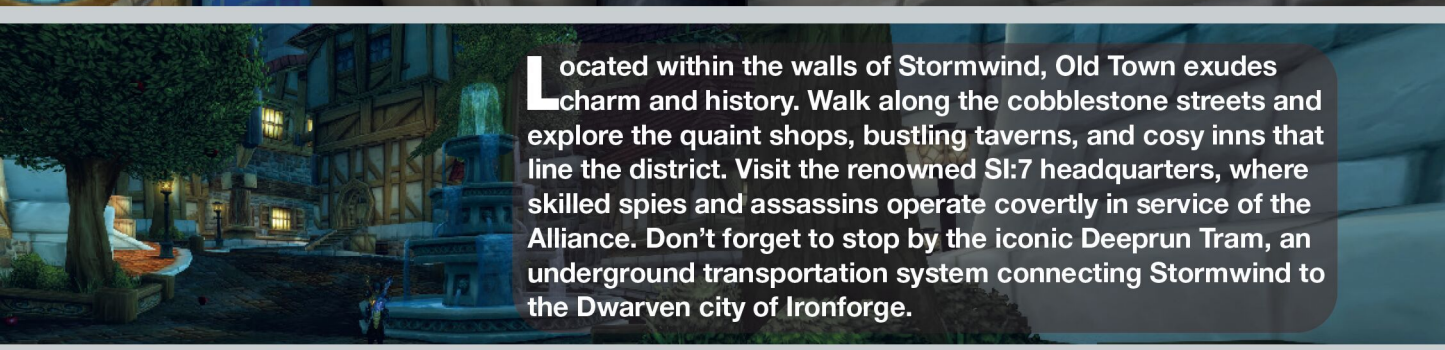
Lions Rest



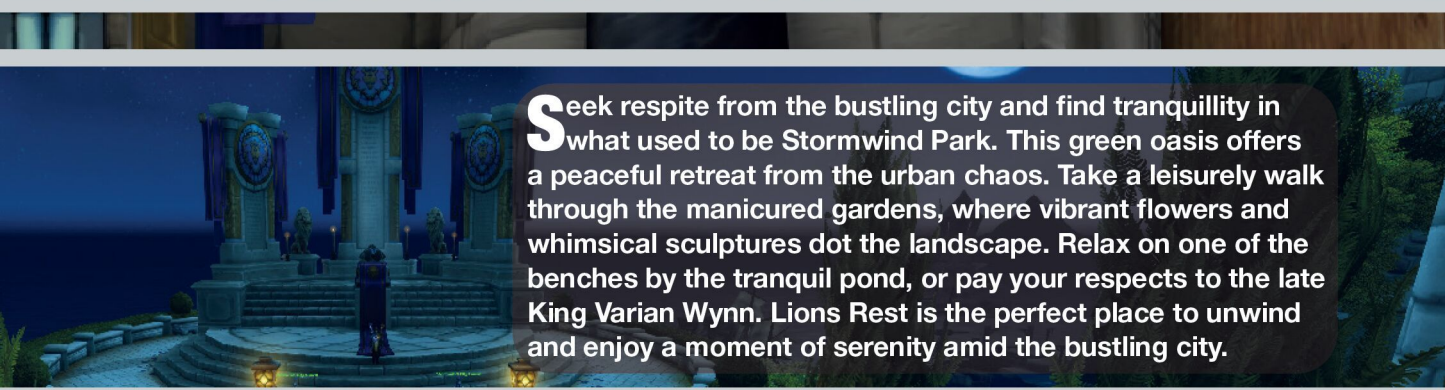
Cathedral of Light



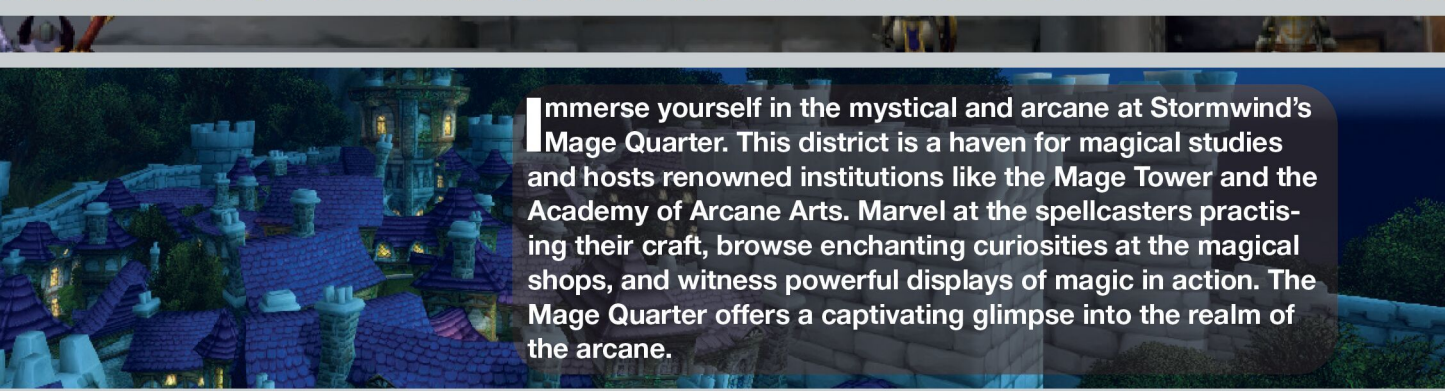
Whether you seek cultural exploration, spiritual introspection, or a simple escape into nature, Stormwind offers diverse experiences that will leave you enchanted and eager to explore more. Here are four places to visit within the city that capture the essence of Stormwind, showcasing its grandeur, history, magic, and peaceful corners.



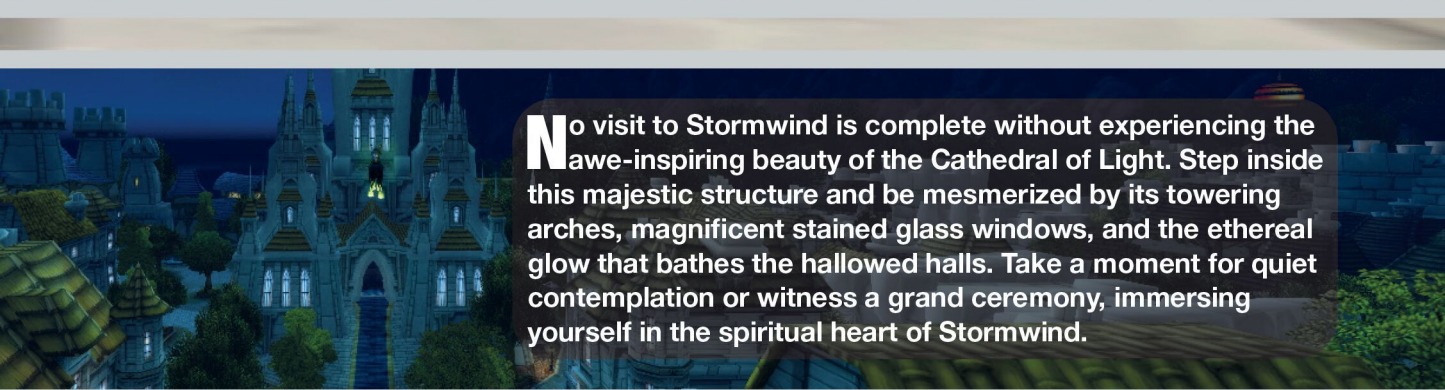
Located within the walls of Stormwind, Old Town exudes charm and history. Walk along the cobblestone streets and explore the quaint shops, bustling taverns, and cosy inns that line the district. Visit the renowned SI:7 headquarters, where skilled spies and assassins operate covertly in service of the Alliance. Don't forget to stop by the iconic Deeprun Tram, an underground transportation system connecting Stormwind to the Dwarven city of Ironforge.



Sseek respite from the bustling city and find tranquillity in what used to be Stormwind Park. This green oasis offers a peaceful retreat from the urban chaos. Take a leisurely walk through the manicured gardens, where vibrant flowers and whimsical sculptures dot the landscape. Relax on one of the benches by the tranquil pond, or pay your respects to the late King Varian Wynn. Lions Rest is the perfect place to unwind and enjoy a moment of serenity amid the bustling city.



Immerse yourself in the mystical and arcane at Stormwind's Mage Quarter. This district is a haven for magical studies and hosts renowned institutions like the Mage Tower and the Academy of Arcane Arts. Marvel at the spellcasters practising their craft, browse enchanting curiosities at the magical shops, and witness powerful displays of magic in action. The Mage Quarter offers a captivating glimpse into the realm of the arcane.



No visit to Stormwind is complete without experiencing the awe-inspiring beauty of the Cathedral of Light. Step inside this majestic structure and be mesmerized by its towering arches, magnificent stained glass windows, and the ethereal glow that bathes the hallowed halls. Take a moment for quiet contemplation or witness a grand ceremony, immersing yourself in the spiritual heart of Stormwind.

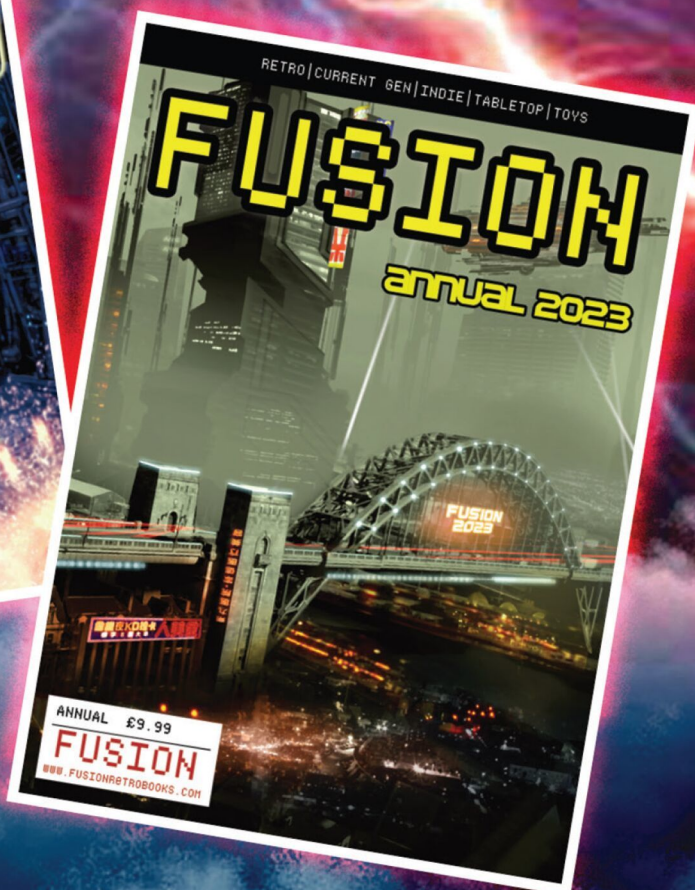


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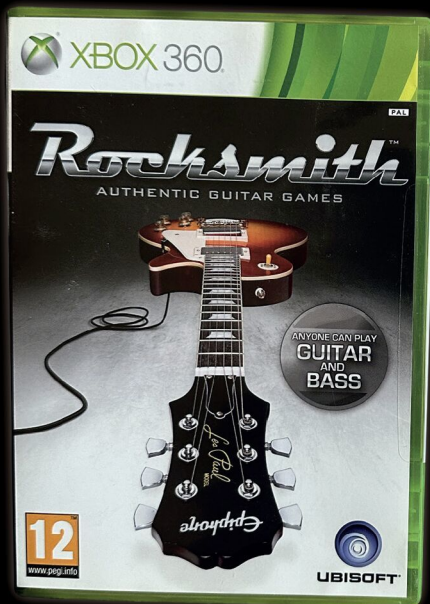
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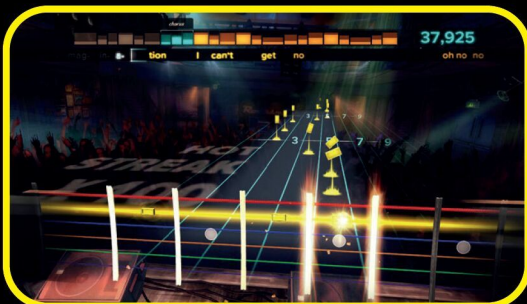


FUSION MUSICAL MARVELS

THIS MONTH'S MUSICAL MARVEL WILL ACTUALLY TEACH YOU TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT. BEN HONEBONE INVESTIGATES WITH SOLOS FROM ANDREW FISHER AND PAUL TWIST.



Musical Marvel/Game: Rocksmith
System: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3
Developer: Santa Monica Studio
Year: 2012



Like most worthwhile skills, learning to play an instrument is hard. The initial stages of learning to play the guitar involve a lot of physical and mental adjustment as your hands and mind learn to do new things together. "Gamifying" this process into something that works without teaching you a host of bad habits in the process is no small feat, but Ubisoft pulled it off.

The three elements that make *Rocksmith* a viable learning tool are the colour system, adaptive difficulty, and the mini-games. The guitar strings are colour-coded onscreen, meaning you can focus on learning hand-eye coordination without worrying about names, notes, or scales. It's an effective technique that encourages you to play without looking at the guitar whenever possible. Whether you're a complete beginner or an intermediate player like me (I'm a rhythm guy), *Rocksmith* adapts to your skill level by

monitoring your playing and adjusting the difficulty to suit. You might begin playing a song with just one string, but another will be added once you're playing that string consistently and in time. If followed, this process will eventually see you playing a complete song, with all the bells and whistles from the original recording.

The icing on the *Rocksmith* cake is the mini-games. Playing songs you like is fun, but you will only retain your newfound abilities if you practice the numerous techniques you're using. Ubisoft tries to plug this gap in their teaching plan by creating mini-games focusing on a particular technique, like chords or scales. For the most part, the games work well, and they round out an impressive suite of learning tools.

You'll probably need more than *Rocksmith* to become a guitarist, but Ubisoft's ambitious package is an excellent starting point and will get you well beyond the beginner stage if you put the hard work in. As a music writer, performer, and someone still learning to play the guitar (you never stop learning), I wholeheartedly recommend *Rocksmith* to anyone who wants to learn to play an axe!

Rocksmith RECOMMEND OR REGRET?

With Paul Twist

Back when I could still use both hands, I always liked the idea of playing the bass but lacked the self-discipline (or, indeed, the raw talent) to learn. I fancied myself as the next Matt Freeman from Rancid or perhaps following in the footsteps of the two bassists from Ned's Atomic Dustbin! While *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* let me live out my rock star fantasies with a pretend instrument, *Rocksmith*'s promise of doing the same with a real instrument proved irresistible.

Rocksmith on Xbox 360 soon had me playing bass along with Kim Deal on Here Comes Your Man. I never progressed beyond the basics, but *Rocksmith* got me playing music better than any school teacher ever managed. Turning learning an instrument into a video game really worked, and I found that *Rocksmith* worked equally well as a game and an educational tool.



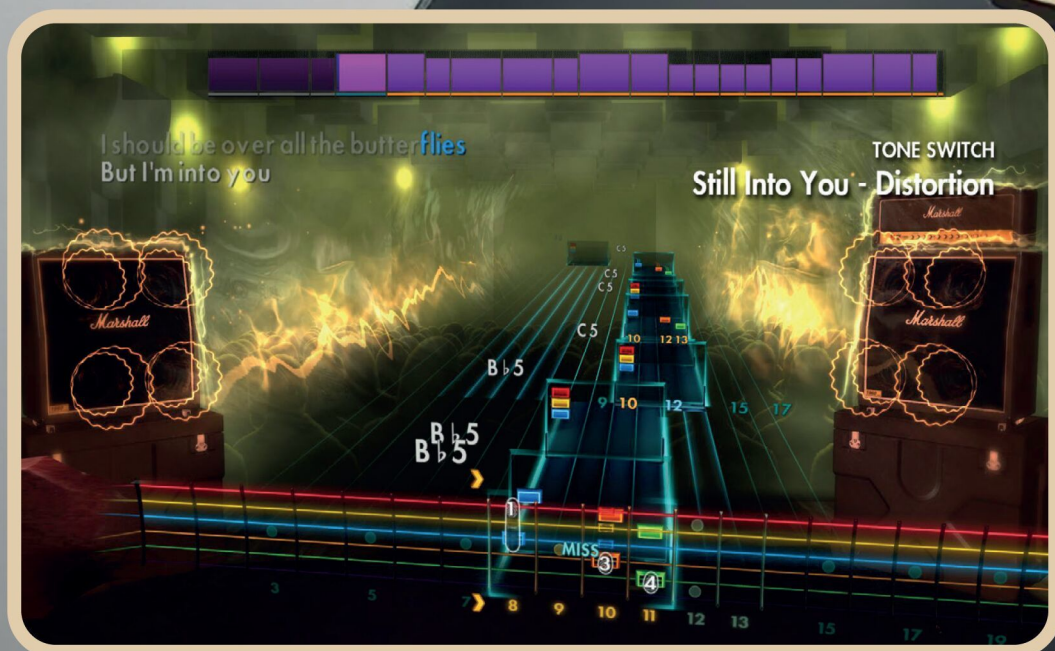
FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK!

A Brief History of *Rocksmith*

Rocksmith first appeared at the 2008 Game Developers Conference, where small developer Game Tank showed off the original demo of *Guitar Rising* (its working title). The key components were the USB cable that connected to a real guitar, and the horizontally scrolling note chart – like actual guitar tablature. Ubisoft's San Francisco studio took over Game Tank and refined the game. The scrolling notes became vertical, moving towards the fretboard shown at the bottom of the screen, and a dispute with a British band over the name, *Rocksmith*, was settled in Ubisoft's favour. The original game launched in September 2012 for Xbox 360 and PS3 bundled with the Real Tone USB cable, with the Windows version launching the next month, followed by an expansion that added bass guitar.

Rocksmith 2014 followed in late 2013, with the ability to export most songs from the original game if purchased. Fifty new songs were included in the 2014 edition for bass and guitar. The Xbox 360's Kinect camera could also be used to control the menus and sing along. Additional songs were made available as DLC (only compatible with the 2014 edition) for an incredible 383 weeks up to 2020. The *Remastered* edition launched in 2016; a patch allowed the use of Microphone Mode, meaning the Real Tone cable was no longer a necessity.

Like other Ubisoft products, the latest version, *Rocksmith+* for PC, launched in 2022, is based on a subscription model – giving access to over 6,000 songs, with more added regularly. A separate Rocksmith Tuner App has recently been released for Android and iOS, which allows you to tune a guitar or bass with 30 pre-set tuning variations.



Rocksmith



RECOMMEND OR REGRET?

With Andrew Fisher

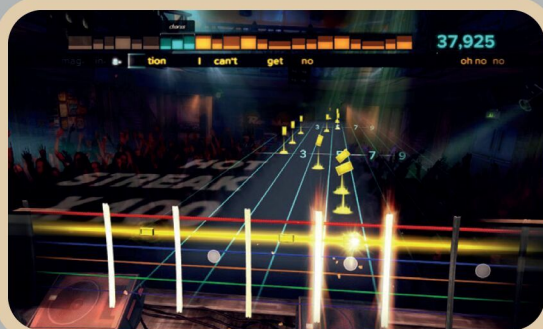
I played a lot of *Rock Band* and wanted to transfer my plastic guitar dreams into real playing. I bought *Rocksmith* for the Xbox 360 with its Real Tone Cable and an electro-acoustic guitar with a built-in tuner. The idea was that I could play the guitar acoustically when it wasn't hooked up to *Rocksmith*.

The game is clever, gradually introducing more notes and trickier techniques as you become more proficient. The Technique Challenges (for specific techniques) and Guitarcade (small games aimed to improve your playing) become available as you progress. Riff Repeater lets you practice important sections of a song over and over. And unlike *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band*, you cannot fail a song; *Rocksmith* will keep playing to the end and appraise you no matter how many notes you hit.

It took some getting used to the menu system and tuning. Among the 56 included songs, several require different tunings. Although my guitar had its built-in tuner – requiring a D-cell battery – I found the in-game tuning was more accurate, if a little fiddly to get used to. An early example of different tuning was a song I wanted to try; You Really Got Me, by The Kinks. A broken string also held up my progress.

Another critical aspect is that you can learn lead guitar, rhythm guitar or bass. My older brother Chris bought an electric bass and amp; he has spent several years playing and practising. He has acquired a much higher skill level on the PC version, to the point where the game is now “hiding” notes for him to play (meaning it is possible to score over 100% on a song). I also found myself drawn to playing bass as much as lead guitar. One of the key aspects of the PC version was the ability to add your own note charts for different songs, and a substantial number were available online.

Then, two things stopped my progress. Health issues meant I had less time where I was able to sit and play the guitar, and a relationship meant there was even less time for gaming or playing the guitar. Now that relationship has ended, I want to get back to *Rocksmith*. But I fear it will mean restarting my progress and returning to basics. ■



toy-polloi world record

A MILE OF MAYHEM!



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Sometimes, I get a silly idea that I can't shake off; more often than not, it's toy-related. My current mild obsession has me wondering if there is some way that I can get a Guinness World record for something toy related.

There are already world records for the largest toy car collection, which currently stands at over 30,000 unique cars. The largest Lego model of a life-size X-Wing Starfighter was built by a team in the Czech Republic and measured over 13m long. The record for the longest Slinky walk was set by Marty Jopson and Hugh Hunt from the UK in 2014 when they managed to walk a Slinky down 30 steps. The longest line of toy cars consisted of 24,189 cars lined up end to end by the National Motor

Museum and measured nearly 2 kilometres. Those are all pretty varied records, with some sounding more achievable than others - which is where this all started.

I was having trouble sleeping one night and was pondering some of the toys I have in my collection, toys I have multiples of like Star Wars Imperial figures and my growing Skeletor army. Could these collections be used in a world record attempt, something that would be interesting enough for Guinness to add to their book?

At first, I thought about collecting enough of one figure to match a certain weight as that would be easy to work out and potentially a large number of figures. Let's start with collecting my own weight as that's easy to find out. A quick hop on the scales informs me that I weigh 77.6kg. A vintage Kenner stormtrooper

figure weighs 15g, so I need 5,173 stormtroopers to match my weight. Skeletor is a larger figure and weighs 85g, so I would only need 913 to match my weight.

Those are both large numbers and would be a challenge, but I don't think matching my weight is something Guinness would be interested in for a world record. It's not exciting. What you need is something that is pun-based and also a challenge. And that's when I had the idea - A mile of Miles Mayhem!

Kenner's 80s M.A.S.K. toy line and cartoon's main bad guy has the perfect name, a challenge, and a pun all in one - Miles Mayhem. Would it be possible to line up one mile's worth of Miles Mayhems in a line?

a mile of mayhem

The first thing to do is work out how many Miles Mayhem figures I need to get a mile of them laid out head to toe. It's a perfect opportunity to use my digital callipers and accurately measure the basic figure. Without his mask, Miles stands 73.45mm tall (yes, I will be using metric measurements), and 1 mile is equivalent to 1.61km or 161000cm.



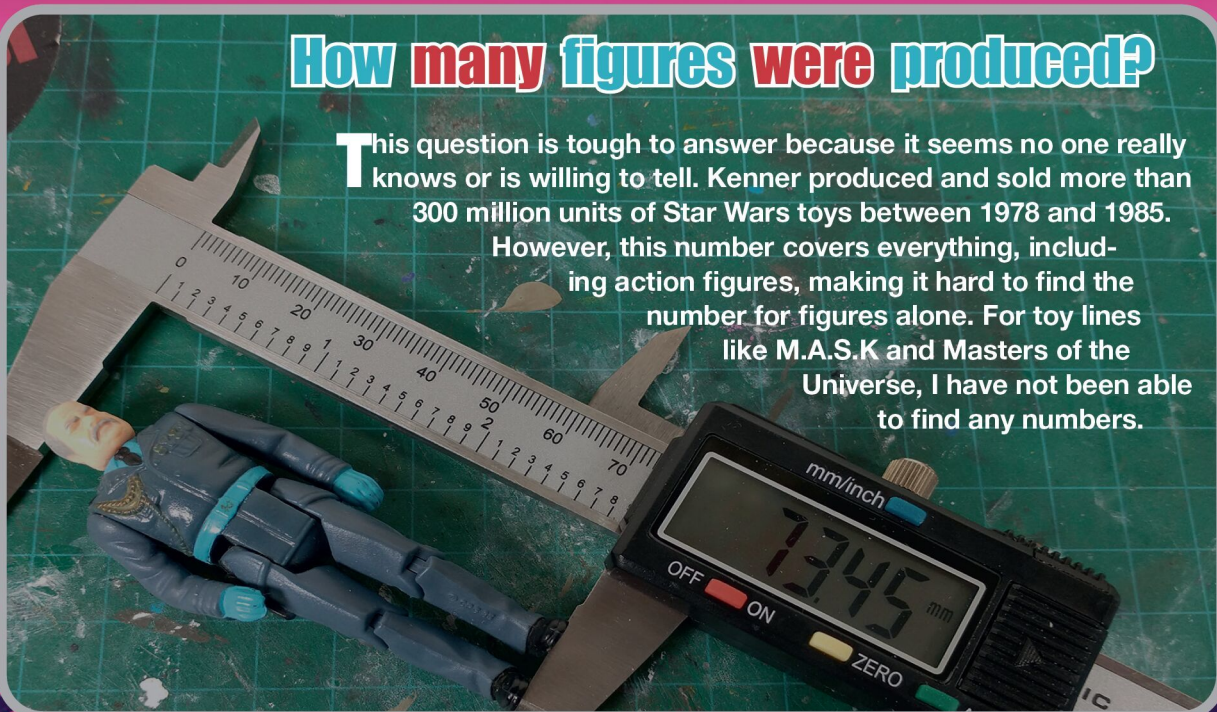
That would mean I'd need 21,905 Miles Mayhem figures, and I have to say that is a fair few more than I had imagined, especially as I currently only have 7, so it would take some work and quite a lot of collecting to get anywhere near that number.

Let's scale it back and see how many Mayhems I need to achieve one kilometre in length; 13,605. That's still an awful lot, and I wonder if that many figures of him were even produced. He is undoubtedly a common toy, but possibly not that common.

How many figures were produced?

This question is tough to answer because it seems no one really knows or is willing to tell. Kenner produced and sold more than 300 million units of Star Wars toys between 1978 and 1985.

However, this number covers everything, including action figures, making it hard to find the number for figures alone. For toy lines like M.A.S.K and Masters of the Universe, I have not been able to find any numbers.





the miles high club

How high could we get a Miles Mayhem figure? High enough for him to join the 'Miles high club'? I've seen people send all sorts of things up to the edge of space, including a few toys like Action Man and Lego, so I don't think sending a Miles Mayhem figure up on a balloon would be world record worthy. However, it just so happened that on a recent flight, I had Mr. Mayhem in my pocket, so at least one figure has already reached one mile high, flying at 9039m (29428 ft) and higher.



What else is toy-related and possible? Someone is trying to make the Masters of The Universe figure, Ram-Man, rare by collecting everyone he finds. I don't think he has even scratched the surface on that particular goal, but you can check out his progress on Instagram; @youwillberare.

I modified a few of the Ram Man figures in my collection to jump far higher than they ever did originally [see issue 31 for that - Ed]. Maybe there could be a world record for firing Ram Man as high or as far as possible. He is pretty indestructible, so I'm sure he'd survive the journey!

Other ideas I've had include transforming as many G1 Transformers as possible in a minute, or a gathering of toy collectors, where everyone brings their talking Action Man dolls and makes them talk simultaneously. Or, send a toy like a MOTU Trap Jaw down a long zip-wire. They could all work but don't quite hit the spot for a world record because they all seem very beatable.

If you have any ideas of what I could do, please get in touch with me, as I am open to suggestions. ■



ZX Holidays

AS A LIFELONG SPECTRUM FAN, PAUL TWIST COULD DO WITH A HOLIDAY AFTER REVIEWING SO MANY COMMODORE 64 GAMES IN RECENT ISSUES OF FUSION.

If you're travelling via ZX Spectrum +2, there's every chance this one won't cost you a thing, as it came bundled with the machine. As you might expect, the game is based on Robert Louis Stevenson's book of the same name. Treasure Island is the perfect choice if you're looking for a more sedate experience. You'll find very little to do but at least there is plenty of sand.



Treasure
Island

Sinclair
1984



Island Getaways



As I type this, it's June, the sun's blazing through the windows, and the temperature is a scorching 28°C. In such conditions, thoughts inevitably turn to summer holidays. However, we're in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, so a fortnight on the beach is out of the question. So, can my humble Speccy transport me to a virtual 8-bit holiday, just like it used to during the school summer holidays back in the 80s?



Treasure Island isn't the only Treasure Island-based ZX Holiday experience. A far superior option is the Oliver Twins' masterpiece, Treasure Island Dizzy, which is also the perfect ZX holiday experience if you're travelling on a budget. And, if you're looking for plenty of sand and fun activities to participate in, you'll find head-scratching puzzles aplenty in this sequel to the Oliver Twins' classic egg-based puzzler.



Treasure
Island
Dizzy

Oliver Twins
Codemasters

1989

ZX Holidays

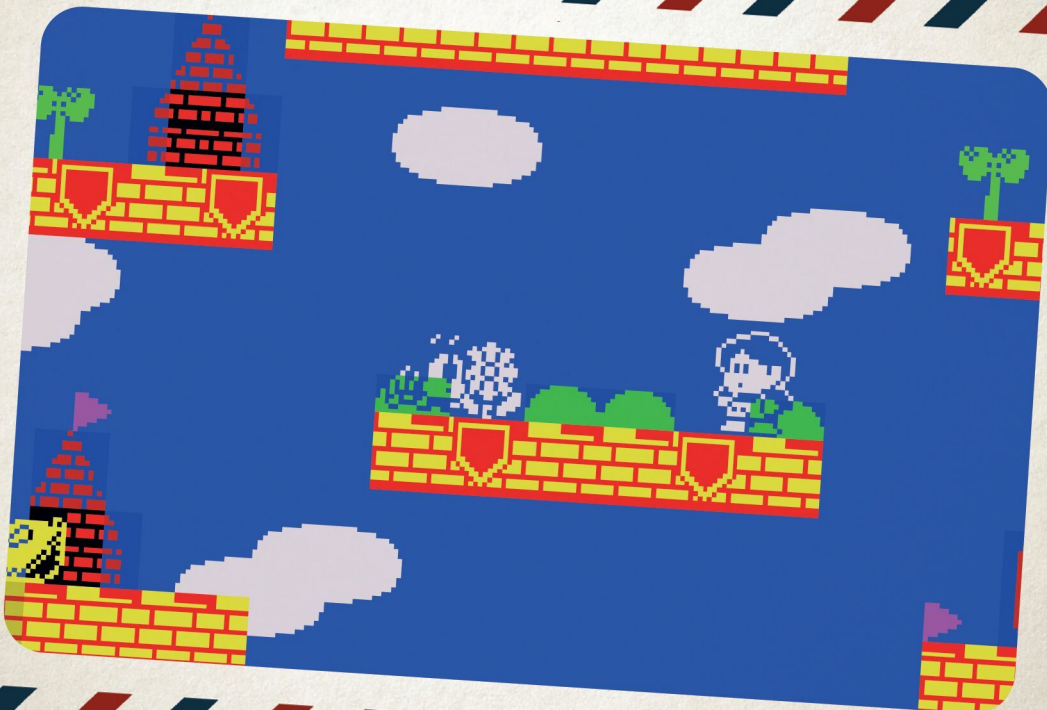
The views may be more colourful for those travelling by Commodore Amiga, but a ZX Holiday to Rainbow Islands is just as playable on the Spectrum, even if the rainbows are monochrome. Be sure to sample the local drinks to enhance your rainbows, and remember to collect a diamond or two as mementoes of your visit. But be wary of the local wildlife, which can be dangerous, especially the giant insects!



Rainbow
Islands

Ocean
Software

1990





For all your Retro news!



FUSIONRGAMER.COM



"IT'S BEEN A LONG ROAD, GETTING FROM THERE TO HERE..." RUSSELL WATSON'S UNDERAPPRECIATED WARBLING NEVER FELT SO APT.

■ Much like trying to get through all four seasons of *Enterprise*, *Lego 2K Drive* also ended up being something of a slog. You would think combining the open-world mechanics of the *Forza Horizon* series, racing karts, and the sensibilities of *The Lego Movie* would be a top-of-the-podium result. After all, *Forza Horizon IV* did it to a lesser degree with its *Lego* expansion pack. That, however, was a bite-sized morsel compared to this offering from 2K, bringing with it its own issues.

The first thing you'll note is the presentation style, taking its lead from *The Lego Movie* (a favourite of mine). Self-awareness mixes with satire, and while it remains child friendly at all times, it's funny (in the beginning, anyway). The *Lego Movie* was 110 minutes of zaniness, yet here you'll be bombarded with said humour for hours. And hours. Sure, you'll chuckle the first time you hear the names like Parker Carr. But, after a few days, you'll beg for it to stop. Graphically, it looks good, with an aesthetic that perfectly suits the world of bricks. Voice work throughout is pitch perfect, but the soundtrack is forgettable, unlike Mr. Watson's ballad from *Enterprise* [Make it stop - Ed].

Lego 2K Drive's gameplay is straightforward; win enough races around Bricklandia to collect flags and eventually compete in, and win, the Sky Cup. You'll be racing around three specific environments: Big Butte Valley (think American Wild West), Prospecto Valley (a greener version of Big Butte County), and Hauntborough (an area



Above: One of the many challenges - upgrade for the gold!

permanently set to Halloween), all connected by a central hub. There is plenty to explore around Bricklandia, and it's all mandatory, so you can level up and participate in specific races. From speed runs to round 'em-ups, the varied and numerous challenges offer a pleasant diversion from the core racing and that oh-so-important credits balance. You'll need to master the boost, power slide, jump and quick turn for these and the primary races. Some good old kart racing weapons are also included. Homing Missiles, Spider Webs, and Ghost Mode offer fun and shenanigans on the tracks, which is good because the racing is patchy.

My main complaint is the rubber banding. Sure, it's a staple of kart racers, but it is actively punishing here. You always start at the back of the pack, and as a design decision, I understand why - it makes every race nail-biting. Although the weapons helped, I often found spamming the boost button the only way to win, and even then, it was always close. It didn't take long for me to start dreading the races. The developers may have realised this



Above: Race start! Spot the competition through the dust they've left you in, again.



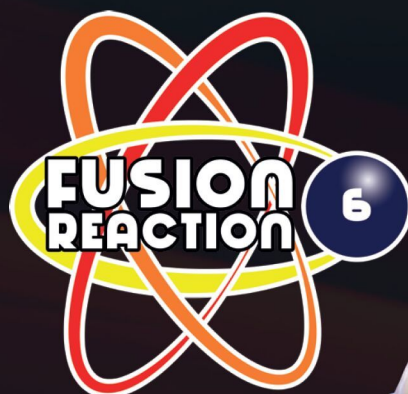
2K DRIVE

WORDS BY ANDREW OYSTON

because the side challenges and mini-games are a decent break from the grind. However, vehicle handling doesn't help. The auto-transform ability, which morphs your vehicle from quad bike to car to boat, depending on the surface you're on, is excellent. But no matter your mode, the handling always seems too heavy. You get used to it in the races, but it's unpleasant when engaged in the many mini-games. When combined, these elements make the game tiring to play.

After winning eleven races, unlocking the third environment and going through a sign-up process to gain access to the in-game store - I found that I could afford one car with my winnings. Or a couple of characters. That was it. Although the publishers take great care to state that there is no need to purchase in-game credits, the economy leans toward the player spending real cash unless you have a lot of time to invest in the challenges, vehicle building, and customisation options available. There is much content to immerse yourself in here, so this may be a viable option for some players with time.

I started playing *Lego 2K Drive* wanting to enjoy it. I did for the first couple of hours, but then the niggles and flaws wormed their way to the surface. The incessant dad-joke level of presentation, the constant pressure in races, and the ever-present knowledge that no matter what I do, my credit balance rises with the climbing ability of a narcoleptic sloth, all chipped away at the appeal of what should have been a charming time sink. There is fun to be had here, but only if you dedicate your life to it. I couldn't, but maybe you can if you've got "Faith of the heart". ■





Getting around in Lego 2K Drive

There are three modes of transport in Bricklandia, each with its own idiosyncrasies. This trio will propel you into the campaign for the Sky Cup.

Car

It's red. It goes fast. It can power slide. Generic in the extreme. It's the drive you'll least experience, mainly because as soon as you go off-road, you'll get the...

Quad Bike

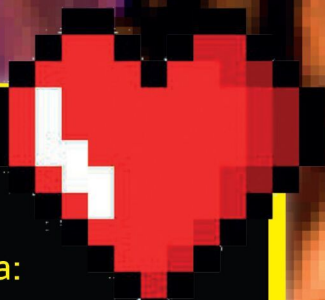
It looks unbalanced, but this thing can move. Be careful, though; if you use the rapid turn button, you lose all momentum, which makes it a pain in the races. Still, it's better than the...

Boat

Turning like a recalcitrant shopping trolley in the snow, you'll want to replace this as soon as possible.



FUSION



Game : *The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds*

Year : 2013

System : 3DS

Words : Ben Magnet

■ Making a sequel to a beloved game can be challenging for developers, especially when the game is over twenty years old. Yet Nintendo pulled it off when it proclaimed *The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds* was the spiritual successor to the SNES mega-hit, *A Link To The Past*. While *A Link Between Worlds* pays homage to the original, it ultimately marches to the beat of its own drum.

One of the best things about this game is that after you get through the story exposition, you can tackle any dungeon in any order you want. The world is your oyster to explore and discover. However, *A Link Between Worlds* does something that sets it apart from other top-down *Zelda* titles. Items like the bow, boomerang, and ice staff are all available to you from the beginning of the game, but; there's a catch. A rabbit-hooded merchant named Ravio rents the items to you (and moves into your home). If you get the 'Game Over' screen, all your items are returned to Ravio, and you'll need to rent them again. Eventually, you'll earn enough rupees to buy the items outright, but they are outlandishly expensive at the beginning of your quest.

The most prominent new mechanic of the game is Link's ability to merge into walls and become a kind of mural that can move horizontally along that surface. It makes exploration, puzzle-solving, and boss fights more interesting. Is there a treasure chest just out of reach on a platform across a bottomless pit? Merge into the wall and walk across to reach it. If a boss won't stop bothering you - merge into his shield to stage a sneak attack. This mechanic makes travel between worlds much more straightforward and is the game's stand-out feature.

A Link Between Worlds brought tons of old with it, as well as the new. The map is nearly identical to *A Link To The Past*'s, and the top-down perspective translates so well on the 3DS with 3D features turned on or off. It is a must-own for 3DS fans, and is my favourite *Zelda* game. ■



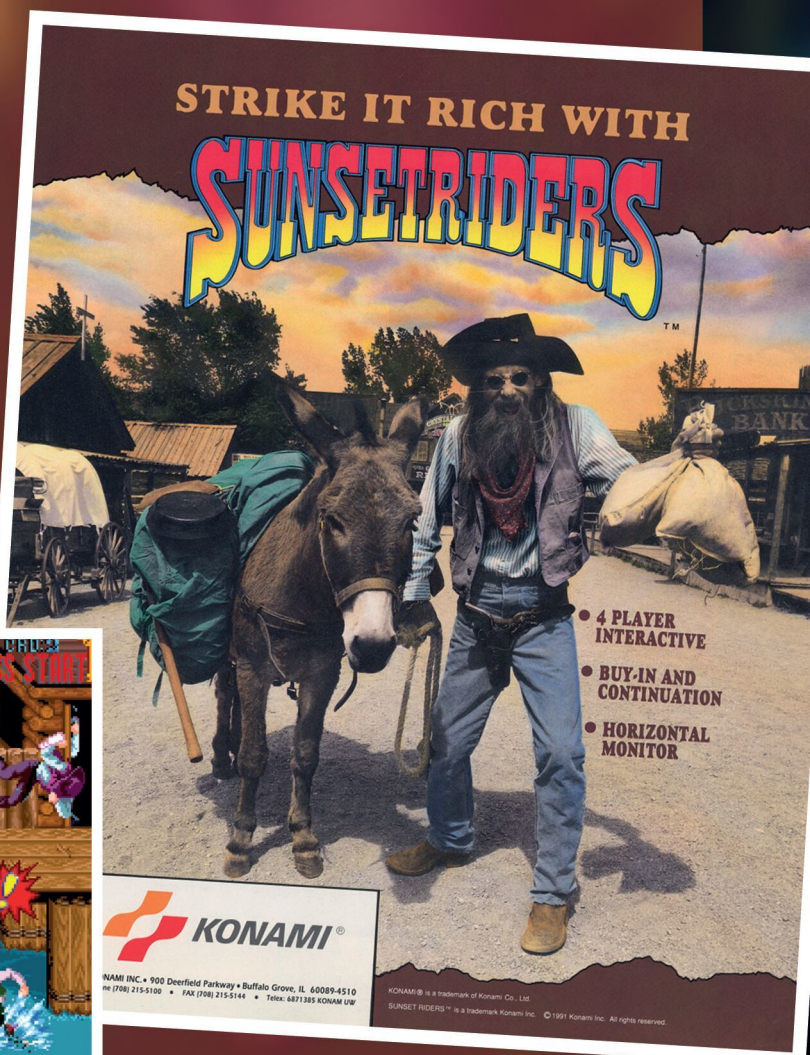
10 Classic

90s ARCADE GAMES

IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER, RETRO FAITH CHOOSES TEN ARCADE GAMES THAT HAD HER THROWING 10P PIECES INTO BULKY CABINETS FOR AN ENTIRE DECADE.

SUNSET RIDERS

While not the most legendary title on this list, *Sunset Riders* has a place in my heart as one of the first arcade games my brothers and I completed. There was something magical about being a cowboy hero on the hunt for dangerous outlaws and strolling down the streets, taking them all down. There was always an argument about who played as Cormano due to his powerful shotgun. The later console releases didn't quite live up to the excitement of the arcade version, and it's worth checking this out if you have yet to try it beyond the SNES or Mega Drive conversions.

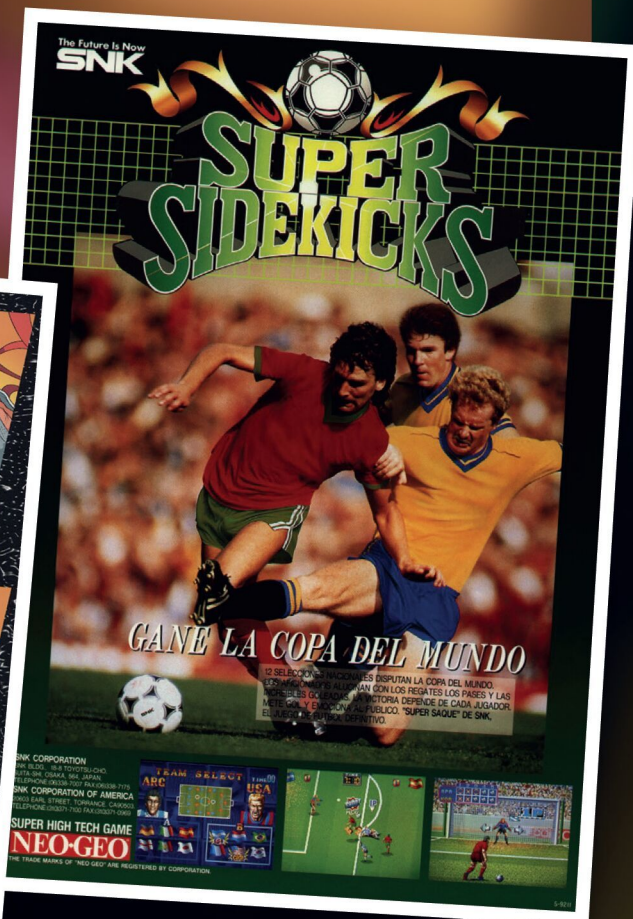


SUPER SIDKICKS

To 'kick off' my list, I want to 'champion' *Super Sidekicks* - sorry. This arcade football title looked out of this world using the Neo Geo hardware, and the large sprites were like nothing we could ever imagine at home. The aggressive announcer screaming when you score or proclaiming the kick-off was all part of the fun of this fast-paced game. Even with the gameplay being quite basic for the time, its simplicity made it playable. Most arcade games required some practice, but *Super Sidekicks* was a game anyone could pick up quickly.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM

When this dropped in early 1998, my head almost exploded. After the excellent work Capcom had done with the Marvel fighting games that preceded this, everything was brought together for a showdown of epic proportions. The fighting system is exquisite, the character art is spellbinding, and the super moves are out of this world. The speed and array of attacks and secret characters made this game jump out in the arcade. Many would argue that *Marvel Vs Capcom II* is the better game, but it all started with this one. "Let's go crazy!"



RAIDEN

It's easy to argue that its sequels are better games, but the original *Raiden* is a true classic. It felt so fresh compared to the other shooters of its day. The bright graphics and detailed special effects made it stand out against some of the dark, murkier shmups available at the time. *Raiden* is also a speedy game and sometimes feels like an early bullet hell shooter. But for all those plus points, the standout feature is its co-op play that allows players to combine their ships for a powerful tag-team move.



NBA JAM

When *NBA Jam* landed in 1993, everyone went wild. We were so used to scraping it out on fighting games or brawlers that Midway's frantic basketball sim was a breath of fresh air we needed. It was hard at first, getting used to the mechanics of stealing the ball and slam-dunking. But after a while, screams of "boomshakalaka" and "he's heating up" would be mainstays in my vocabulary for the rest of the decade. It's also memorable for the two vs. two excitement, with teams sticking together like glue to be crowned champions. "He's on fire!"

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NBA JAM

PEELER TURBO
 INSERT COINS
 CREDIT 00
 THREE POINTS
 INSERT COINS
 L.A. LAKERS
 DALLAS
 1ST QUARTER
 TOURNAMENT EDITION
 1:49

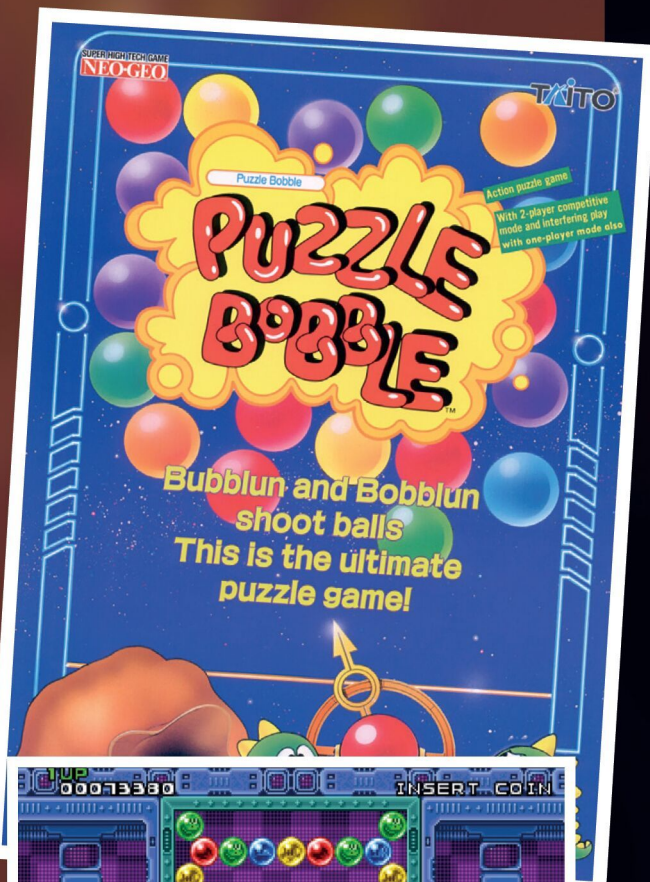


PUZZLE BOBBLE

I was one of those weird kids that would get excited about new puzzle games. My brothers and friends were only interested in racing, fighting, and sports games, but occasionally, I would relax with block puzzlers. *Puzzle Bobble*, a spin-off from the famous *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands* games, impressed me with its cute characters and bright, bold visuals. The challenging gameplay also enthralled me, and clearing the entire board took me a while. There is just something satisfying about chaining together exploding balls.

MORTAL KOMBAT

I still remember the shiver down my spine the first time I heard "Finish Him!" boom out of a *Mortal Kombat* cabinet. It was only eclipsed when someone finally unleashed one of the famed fatalities, and we watched in amazement as game characters melted in front of us. We were manic for the blood and guts and even started to purposefully set up scenarios to attempt the fatalities. Before long, we would return to *Street Fighter II* as it was a better game, but for a brief moment, we enjoyed gore of epic proportions.





THE KING OF FIGHTERS '94

Everyone is familiar with the dominance of *Street Fighter II* during the 90s arcade scene. It deserves its crown as king of the arcade. But in 1994, arcade legends SNK did something that seemed impossible and snatched the crown for itself, albeit briefly. SNK had been trying to compete with Capcom's dominance with *Fatal Fury* and *Art of Fighting* but couldn't get close. While these were good games,

they became immense when the two series were merged. *King of Fighters* was fresh and technical, had sublime pixel art and felt like the fine wine to *Street Fighter's* soda pop.



● For more of Retro Faith's favourite 90s arcade games; check out the Aliens Vs Predator and Metal Slug retrospectives in issues 30 and 35 respectively.



- BUY-IN FEATURE
- CONTINUATION FEATURE

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

It would be rude not to include one of Konami's famous brawlers, so I flipped a coin, and *TMNT* won out over *The Simpsons*. Raphael was my character; I'd refuse to play unless I could be my moody hero. My older brother was Leonardo, as he thought he was our leader, and my younger brother loved Michelangelo. Every so often, a friend would be forced to play as Donatello, and so the pattern remains today. It may be basic button-bashing, but the thrill of playing as those heroes in a half-shell was terrific at the time.



WINDJAMMERS

I have fond memories of SNK's Neo Geo MVS. You could feel the power beaming out from those bright red cabinets housing six games that would invariably change with the mood of the arcade owner. In our local arcade, *Windjammers* was the only Neo Geo game that was always available. Everyone loved it, and its basic gameplay, bold visuals, and slick controls made it a winner on every level. Each character had their own style and special moves that added to the excitement, and the power of the Neo Geo hardware meant the tension was continuously rising. ■

The second Neo-Geo cartridge from Data East!
2P Competitive play!

Mid-game buy-in O.K.!

SUPER HIGH TECH GAME
NEO-GEO

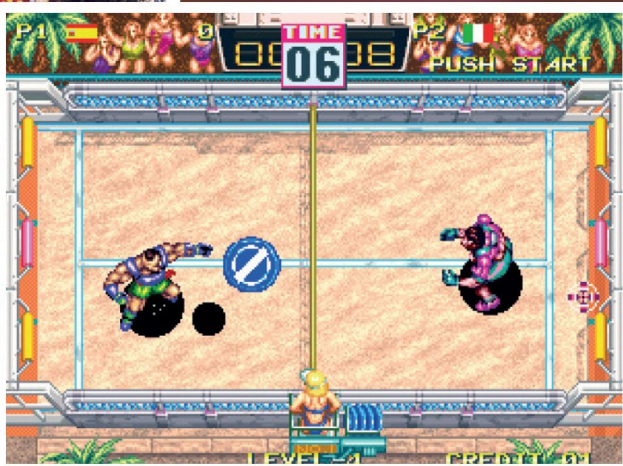
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FUSION REACTOR

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Zoë Kirk-Robinson:

When you start a game like *Rule of Rose*, you don't usually expect to have to battle a mermaid hanging from the ceiling in a blimp. But that's video games for you. *Dark Souls* has nothing on *Rule of Rose*, and not just because it's generally easier to work out what a *Dark Souls* boss is supposed to represent. I still haven't a clue what the duckheads are. In other news, *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* starts well, but the floating train level just gave me flashbacks to *San Andreas*. "You're supposed to catch the train, Dash!"



Toy Polloi:

The large Playmobil display figures that shops use to promote the toy line are a "holy grail toy" for me. I've no idea what I would use it for. It's just something I have wanted to have in my collection. So it was a great weekend when I found one at a toy fair for a price that suited my pocket. I am now the proud owner of a rather substantial Playmobil medieval soldier. What am I going to do with it? I don't know! That's the fun of toy collecting.



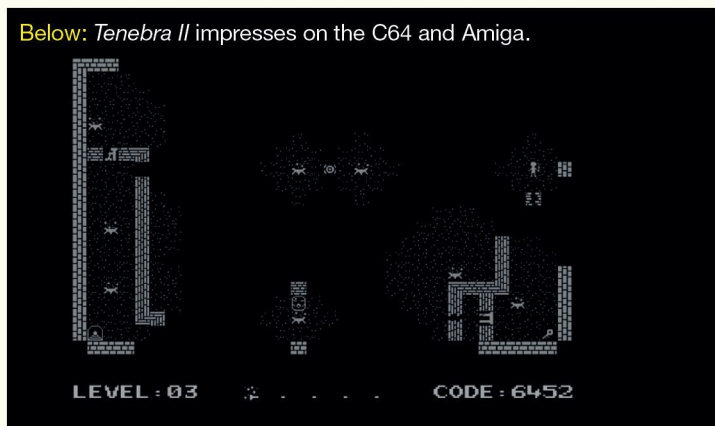
Paul Twist:

This month, I've continued to trail behind the rest of the world regarding AAA games. I finally started *Breath of the Wild* as everyone else began *Tears of the Kingdom*. I have been fightin' them streets in *Street Fighter VI*, albeit only on the demo, as I don't want to buy it for my ageing PS4. I'm waiting until I have a current-gen console. Elsewhere, I've continued delving into Commodore's history with the Team 17 Amiga Collection for Evercade. I've also



Above: There's that upside down mermaid in *Rule of Rose*.

Below: *Tenebra II* impresses on the C64 and Amiga.



squeezed in a few games of *Pac-Man 99* before the servers are turned off in October.



Andrew Fisher:

After writing an introduction to a book last month, I started planning and writing a whole new book myself this month. That's a project to be revealed later, but I also found time to complete *Tenebra II* on the Amiga, a clever puzzle game where you must stay in the light. I also rearranged most of my CD collection, including a huge pile of Amiga CDs I will write about for ZZAP! AMIGA in due course. And finally, I got my paws on the adorable new *Polar Bear in Space* cartridge for the C64.

COLD

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**Alan Hammerton:**

Although I already own it on the 360, I recently bought the remastered versions of the *Lego: Harry Potter* games for the Switch. I'm not sure why, as I rarely buy the same game on other platforms if I already own it, but I'm so glad I broke my rule. Since first playing *Lego: Star Wars II* on the PS2 in 2006, I've been hooked on this series, and this remastered collection is just as good as I remember. It can seem a little basic compared to some of the modern Lego games, but it's still a whole cauldron of fun.

**Retro Faith:**

I've been playing the new *Jedi* game and *Redfall* this month, or should that be "Dreadful"? Both these games are supposedly AAA titles meant to wow and amaze at every turn. If it wasn't for all the bugs and problems that both of these games have, I might have been more enamoured by them. I don't think it's right that companies should charge £50+ for games that are broken on release and will require multiple updates just to be playable. Nintendo did the right thing in putting the release of *Tears of the Kingdom* back until it was ready.

**Andrew Oyston:**

I finally put some time in with *LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga*, and boy, can you tell which films are good and which are terrible from their gaming equivalents. I've still not seen Episode IX and don't want to after playing through it. The game is a riot of funny and on-the-nose jokes about all things Star Wars and a massive collect-a-thon that never becomes boring. Hopefully, Ubisoft will have noticed this and decided to follow TT's approach regarding the missions and collectables in the upcoming *Assasins Creed: Mirage*.

Above: The *Redfall* disaster continues to disappoint the team.Below: The *Lego* games are getting some love this month.**Ben Honebone:**

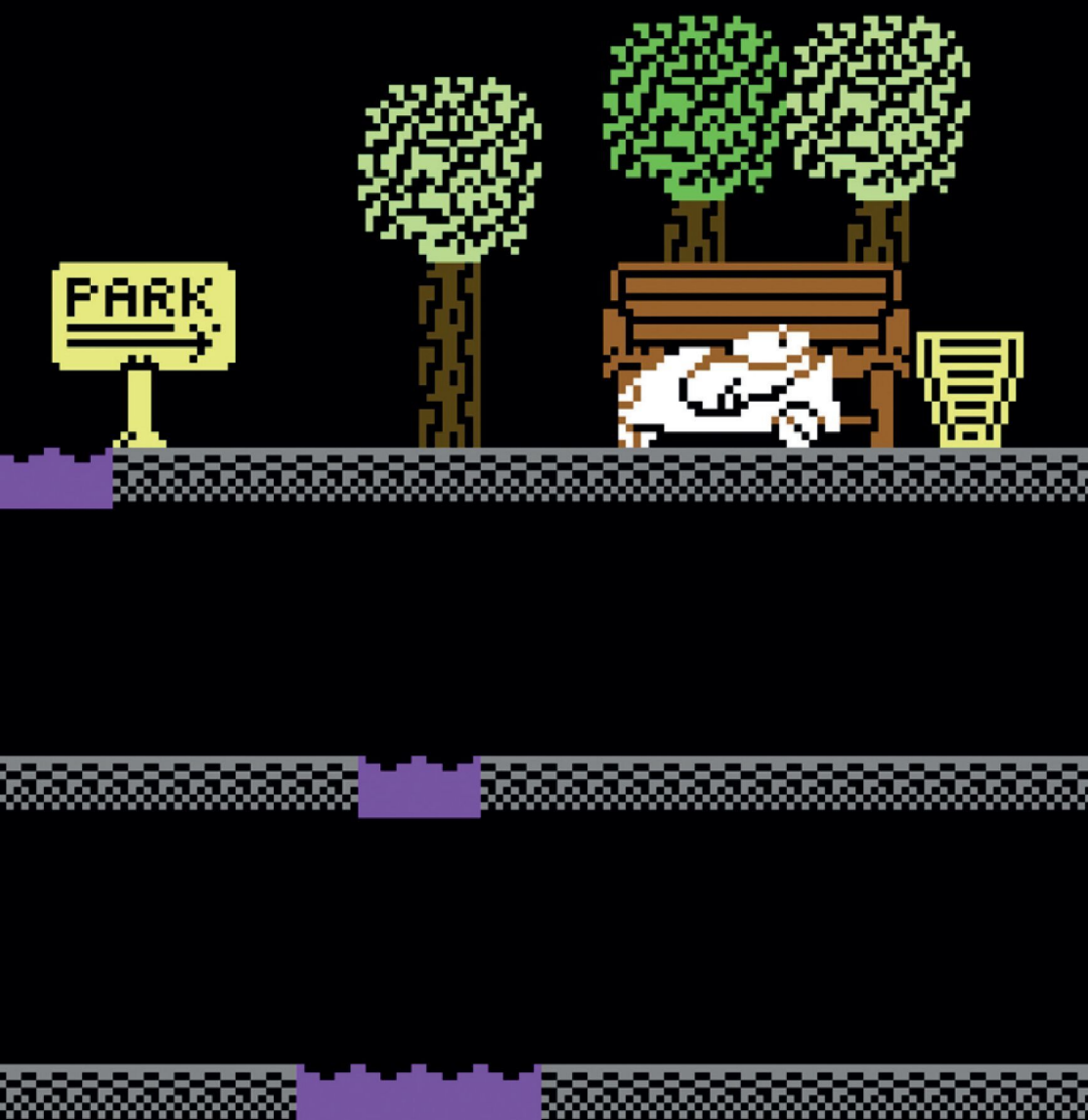
Mental health and how video games affect it is a subject that I have encountered on numerous occasions over the last month, both personally and professionally. While the concept of games providing a respite or outright escape from "real life" is easy to appreciate, I'm not sure what it means to me after almost forty years of gaming. I have many happy memories associated with video games, but I also remember times when I used them to escape my problems. We've been discussing this complicated subject here at FUSION Towers™, and we wondered if it was something we should write about in a future issue. Is this something you'd like to read about? Please let us know what you think via the usual channels. ■

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5 HI-SCORE: 00500



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